The FELLOWSHIP OF BOOKS

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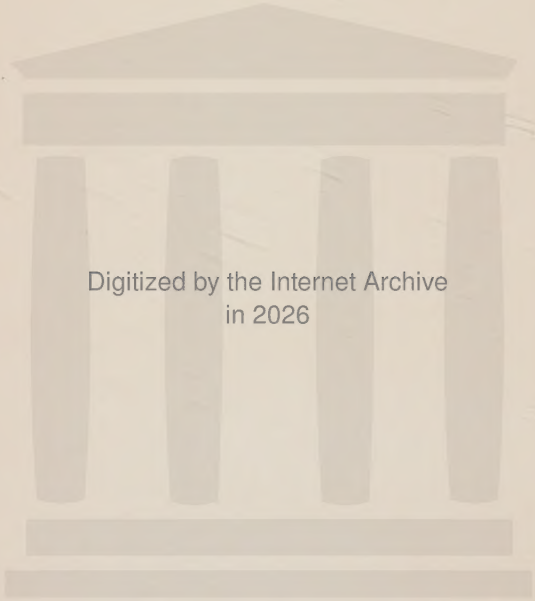

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FELLOWSHIP OF BOOKS

An Eighteenth Century Booklover.

FELLOWSHIP OF BOOKS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR BY BYAM SHAW

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For the abridgments of the addresses by Mr Balfour and F. D. Maurice and of Sir John Lubbock's essay, the Publisher is alone responsible.

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FROM WATER-COLOUR DRAWINGS BY

BYAM SHAW

An Eighteenth-Century Booklover.
frontispiece

"A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit."
page eight

"Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old."
page forty

"Through books we survey the utmost bounds of the world and time, and contemplate the things that are as well as those that are not"
page one hundred and four

THE SCHOLAR BY SOUTHEY

THE SCHOLAR BY SOUTHEY

MY DAYS AMONG THE DEAD ARE
past;
Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old:
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

With them I take delight in weal
And seek relief in woe;
And while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedew'd
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

My thoughts are with the Dead; with them
I live in long-past years,
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
Partake their hopes and fears,
And from their lessons seek and find
Instruction with an humble mind.

My hopes are with the Dead; anon
My place with them will be,
And I with them shall travel on
Through all Futurity;
Yet having here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.

THE PLEASURES OF READING
BY ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR

ABRIDGED

THE PLEASURES OF READING
BY ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR

I AM NOT GOING TO SUPPLY YOU with a new list of a hundred books, nor am I about to take the world into my confidence in respect of my favourite passages from the best authors. Nor again do I address myself to the professed student, to the fortunate individual with whom literature or science is the business as well as the pleasure of life. I have not the qualifications which would enable me to undertake such a task with the smallest hope of success. My theme is humble, though the audience to whom I desire to speak is large; for I speak to the ordinary reader with ordinary capacities and ordinary leisure, to whom reading is, or ought to be, not a business but a pleasure; and my theme is the enjoyment—not the improvement, nor the glory, nor the profit, but the *enjoyment*, which may be derived by such an one from books.

Of all that has been written it is certain that the professed student can master but an infinitesimal fraction. Of that fraction the ordinary reader can master but a very small part. What advice then can be better than to select for study the few masterpieces that have come down to

us, and to treat as non-existent the huge but undistinguished remainder? We are like travellers passing hastily through some ancient city filled with memorials of many generations and more than one great civilisation. Our time is short. Of what may be seen we can only see at best but a trifling fragment. Let us then take care that we waste none of our precious moments upon that which is less than the most excellent. So preaches Mr Frederic Harrison. And when a doctrine which, put thus, may seem not only wise but obvious, is further supported by such assertions as that habits of miscellaneous reading "close the mind to what is spiritually sustaining" by "stuffing it with what is simply curious," or that such methods of study are worse than no habits of study at all because they "gorge and enfeeble" the mind by "excess in that which cannot nourish," I almost feel that in venturing to dissent from it I may be attacking not merely the teaching of common sense but the inspirations of a high morality.

But there is here, surely, some error and some exaggeration. Has miscellaneous reading the dreadful consequences which Mr Harrison depicts? Has it any of them? His declarations a-

bout the intellect being "gorged and enfeebled" by the absorption of too much information, expresses no doubt with great vigour an analogy, for which there is high authority, between the human mind and the human stomach; but surely it is an analogy which may be pressed too far. I have often heard of the individual whose excellent natural gifts have been so overloaded with huge masses of undigested and indigestible learning that they have had no chance of healthy development. But though I have often heard of this personage, I have never met him, and I believe him to be mythical. It is true, no doubt, that many learned people are dull; but there is no indication whatever that they are dull because they are learned. True dulness is seldom acquired; it is a natural grace, the manifestations of which, however modified by education, remain in substance the same. Fill a dull man to the brim with knowledge, and he will not become less dull, as the enthusiasts for education vainly imagine; neither will he become duller, as Mr Harrison appears to suppose. He will remain in essence what he always has been and always must have been. But whereas his dulness would, if left to itself,

have been merely vacuous, it may have become, under careful cultivation, pretentious and pedantic.

I leave this train of thought in order to point out a more fundamental error, as I think it, which arises from regarding literature solely from the high æsthetic standpoint. The pleasures of the imagination derived from the best literary models, form without doubt the most exquisite portion of the enjoyment which we may extract from books; but they do not in my opinion form the largest portion, if we take into account mass as well as quality in our calculation. There is the literature which appeals to the imagination or the fancy, but is there not also the literature which satisfies the curiosity? Is this vast storehouse of pleasure to be thrown hastily aside because many of the facts which it contains are alleged to be insignificant, because the appetite to which they minister is said to be morbid? Consider a little. We are here dealing with one of the strongest intellectual impulses of rational beings. Animals, as a rule, trouble themselves but little with anything unless they want either to eat it or to run away from it. Interest in, and wonder at,

the works of nature and the doings of man are products of civilisation, and excite emotions which do not diminish, but increase with increasing knowledge and cultivation. Feed them and they grow; minister to them and they will greatly multiply. We hear much indeed of what is called "idle curiosity," but I am loth to brand any form of curiosity as necessarily idle. Take, for example, one of the most singular, but, in this age, one of the most universal, forms in which it is accustomed to manifest itself—I mean that of an exhaustive study of the contents of the morning and evening papers. It is certainly remarkable that any person who has nothing to get by it should destroy his eyesight and confuse his brain by a conscientious attempt to master the dull and doubtful details of the European diary daily transmitted to us by " Our Special Correspondent." But it must be remembered that this is only a somewhat unprofitable exercise of that disinterested love of knowledge which moves men to penetrate the Polar snows, to build up systems of philosophy, or to explore the secrets of the remotest heavens. It has in it the rudiments of infinite and varied delights. It *can* be turned, and

it *should* be turned, into a curiosity for which nothing that has been done, or thought, or suffered, or believed—no law which governs the world of matter or the world of mind—can be wholly alien or uninteresting.

Truly it is a subject for astonishment that, instead of expanding to the utmost the employment of this pleasure-giving faculty, so many persons should set themselves to work to limit its exercise by all kinds of arbitrary regulations. Some persons, for example, tell us that the acquisition of knowledge is all very well, but that it must be useful knowledge—meaning usually thereby that it must enable a man to get on in a profession, pass an examination, shine in conversation, or obtain a reputation for learning. But even if they mean something higher than this—even if they mean that knowledge to be worth anything must subserve ultimately if not immediately the material or spiritual interests of mankind, the doctrine is one which should be energetically repudiated. I admit, of course, at once, that discoveries the most apparently remote from human concerns have often proved themselves of the utmost commercial or manufacturing value. But they require no such justi-

fication for their existence, nor were they striven for with any such object. Navigation is not the final cause of astronomy, nor telegraphy of electro-dynamics, nor dye-works of chemistry. And if it be true that the desire of knowledge for the sake of knowledge was the animating motive of the great men who first wrested her secrets from nature, why should it not also be enough for us, to whom it is not given to discover, but only to learn as best we may what has been discovered by others?

Another maxim, more plausible but equally pernicious, is that superficial knowledge is worse than no knowledge at all. That "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing" is a saying which has now got currency as a proverb stamped in the mint of Pope's versification; of Pope, who with the most imperfect knowledge of Greek translated Homer; with the most imperfect knowledge of the Elizabethan drama edited Shakespeare; and with the most imperfect knowledge of philosophy wrote the *Essay on Man*. But what is this "little knowledge" which is supposed to be so dangerous? What is it 'little' in relation to? If in relation to what there is to know, then all human knowledge is

little. If in relation to what actually is known by somebody, then we must condemn as "dangerous" the knowledge which Archimedes possessed of Mechanics, or Copernicus of Astronomy; for a shilling primer and a few weeks' study will enable any student to outstrip in mere information some of the greatest teachers of the past. No doubt, that little knowledge which thinks itself to be great, may possibly be a dangerous, as it certainly is a most ridiculous, thing. We have all suffered under that eminently absurd individual who on the strength of one or two volumes, imperfectly apprehended by himself, and long discredited in the estimation of every one else, is prepared to supply you on the shortest notice with a dogmatic solution of every problem suggested by this "unintelligible world"; or the political variety of the same pernicious genus, whose statecraft consists in the ready application to the most complex question of national interest of some high-sounding commonplace which has done weary duty on a thousand platforms, and which even in its palmiest days was never fit for anything better than a peroration. But in our dislike of the individual do not let us mistake the diagnosis

of his disease. He suffers not from ignorance but from stupidity. Give him learning and you make him not wise, but only more pretentious in his folly.

I say then that so far from a little knowledge being undesirable, a little knowledge is all that on most subjects any of us can hope to attain, and that, as a source not of worldly profit but of personal pleasure, it may be of incalculable value to its possessor. But it will naturally be asked, "How are we to select from among the infinite number of things which may be known those which it is best worth while for us to know?" We are constantly being told to concern ourselves with learning what is important, and not to waste our energies upon what is insignificant. But what are the marks by which we shall recognise the important, and how is it to be distinguished from the insignificant? A precise and complete answer to this question which shall be true for all men cannot be given. I am considering knowledge, recollect, as it ministers to enjoyment, and from this point of view each unit of information is obviously of importance in proportion as it increases the general sum of enjoyment which we obtain, or

expect to obtain, from knowledge. This, of course, makes it impossible to lay down precise rules which shall be an equally sure guide to all sorts and conditions of men; for in this, as in other matters, tastes must differ, and against real difference of taste there is no appeal.

There are two modes in which we can derive what I may call "spectacular" enjoyment from the study of history. There is first the pleasure which arises from the contemplation of some great historic drama, or some broad and well-marked phase of social development. The story of the rise, greatness, and decay of a nation is like some vast epic which contains as subsidiary episodes the varied stories of the rise, greatness, and decay of creeds, of parties and of statesmen. The imagination is moved by the slow unrolling of this great picture of human mutability, as it is moved by the contrasted permanence of the abiding stars. The ceaseless conflict, the strange echoes of long-forgotten controversies, the confusion of purpose, the successes in which lay deep the seeds of future evils, the failures that ultimately divert the otherwise inevitable danger, the heroism which struggles to the last for a cause foredoomed to

defeat, the wickedness which sides with right, and the wisdom which huzzas at the triumph of folly—fate, meanwhile, amidst this turmoil and perplexity, working silently towards the predestined end—all these form together a subject the contemplation of which need surely never weary.

But there is yet another and very different species of enjoyment to be derived from the records of the past, which requires a somewhat different method of study in order that it may be fully tasted. Instead of contemplating as it were from a distance the larger aspects of the human drama, we may elect to move in familiar fellowship amid the scenes and actors of special periods. We may add to the interest we derive from the contemplation of contemporary politics, a similar interest derived from a not less minute, and probably more accurate, knowledge of some comparatively brief passage in the political history of the past. We may extend the social circle in which we move, a circle perhaps narrowed and restricted through circumstances beyond our control, by making intimate acquaintances, perhaps even close friends, among a society long departed, but which, when

we have once learned the trick of it, we may, if it so pleases us, revive.

It is this kind of historical reading which is usually branded as frivolous and useless, and persons who indulge in it often delude themselves into thinking that the real motive of their investigation into bygone scenes and ancient scandals, is philosophic interest in an important historical episode, whereas in truth it is not the philosophy which glorifies the details, but the details which make tolerable the philosophy. Consider, for example, the case of the French Revolution. The period from the taking of the Bastille to the fall of Robespierre is about the same as that which very commonly intervenes between two of our general elections. On these comparatively few months, libraries have been written. The incidents of every week are matters of familiar knowledge. The character and the biography of every actor in the drama has been made the subject of minute study; and by common admission there is no more fascinating page in the history of the world. But the interest is not what is commonly called philosophic, it is personal. Because the Revolution is the dominant fact in modern

history, therefore people suppose that the doings of this or that provincial lawyer, tossed into temporary eminence and eternal infamy by some freak of the revolutionary wave, or the atrocities committed by this or that mob, half drunk with blood, rhetoric, and alcohol, are of transcendent importance. In truth their interest is great, but their importance is small. What we are concerned to know as students of the philosophy of history is, not the character of each turn and eddy in the great social cataract, but the manner in which the currents of the upper stream drew surely in towards the final plunge, and slowly collected themselves after the catastrophe again to pursue, at a different level, their renewed and comparatively tranquil course.

Now, if so much of the interest of the French Revolution depends upon our minute knowledge of each passing incident, how much more necessary is such knowledge when we are dealing with the quiet nooks and corners of history —when we are seeking an introduction, let us say, into the literary society of Johnson, or the fashionable society of Walpole! Society, dead or alive, can have no charm without intimacy,

and no intimacy without interest in trifles which I fear Mr Harrison would describe as 'merely curious.' If we would feel at our ease in any company, if we wish to find humour in its jokes, and point in its repartees, we must know something of the beliefs and the prejudices of its various members, their loves and their hates, their hopes and their fears, their maladies, their marriages, and their flirtations. If these things are beneath our notice, we shall not be the less qualified to serve our queen and country, but need make no attempt to extract pleasure from one of the most delightful departments of literature.

That there is such a thing as trifling information I do not of course question; but the frame of mind in which the reader is constantly weighing the exact importance to the universe at large of each circumstance which the author presents to his notice is not one conducive to the true enjoyment of a picture whose effect depends upon a multitude of slight and seemingly insignificant touches, which impress the mind often without remaining in the memory. The best method of guarding against the danger of reading what is useless is to read only

what is interesting—a truth which will seem a paradox to a whole class of readers, fitting objects of our commiseration, who may be often recognised by their habit of asking some adviser for a list of books, and then marking out a scheme of study in the course of which all are to be conscientiously perused. These unfortunate persons apparently read a book principally with the object of getting to the end of it. They reach the word *finis* with the same sensation of triumph as an Indian feels who strings a fresh scalp to his girdle. They are not happy unless they mark by some definite performance each step in the weary path of self-improvement. To begin a volume and not to finish it would be to deprive themselves of this satisfaction; it would be to lose all the reward of their earlier self-denial by a lapse from virtue at the end. To skip, according to their literary code, is a form of cheating; it is a mode of obtaining credit for erudition on false pretences; a plan by which the advantages of learning are surreptitiously obtained by those who have not won them by honest toil. But all this is quite wrong. In matters literary, works have no saving efficacy. He has only half learnt the art of reading who has not

added to it the even more refined accomplishments of skipping and of skimming; and the first step has hardly been taken in the direction of making literature a pleasure until interest in the subject, and not a desire to spare (so to speak) the author's feelings, or to accomplish an appointed task, is the prevailing motive of the reader.

When I compare the position of the reader of to-day with that of his predecessor of the sixteenth century, I am amazed at the ingratitude of those who are tempted even for a moment to regret the invention of printing and the multiplication of books. There is now no mood of mind to which a man may not administer the appropriate nutriment or medicine at the cost of reaching down a volume from his bookshelf. In every department of knowledge infinitely more is known, and what is known is incomparably more accessible than it was to our ancestors. The lighter forms of literature, good, bad, and indifferent, which have added so vastly to the happiness of mankind, have increased beyond powers of computation, nor do I believe that there is any reason to think that they have elbowed out their more serious and im-

portant brethren. It is perfectly possible for a man, not a professed student, and who only gives to reading the leisure hours of a business life, to acquire such a general knowledge of the laws of nature and the facts of history that every great advance made in either department shall be to him both intelligible and interesting; and he may besides have among his familiar friends many a departed worthy whose memory is embalmed in the pages of memoir or biography. All this is ours for the asking. All this we shall ask for if only it be our happy fortune to love for its own sake the beauty and the knowledge to be gathered from books. And if this be our fortune, the world may be kind or unkind, it may seem to us to be hastening on the wings of enlightenment and progress to an imminent millennium, or it may weigh us down with the sense of insoluble difficulty and irremediable wrong; but whatever else it be, so long as we have good health and a good library, it can hardly be dull.

A SHELF IN MY BOOKCASE
BY ALEXANDER SMITH

A SHELF IN MY BOOKCASE
BY ALEXANDER SMITH

WHEN A MAN GLANCES CRITICALLY through the circle of his intimate friends, he is obliged to confess that they are far from being perfect. They possess neither the beauty of Apollo, nor the wisdom of Solon, nor the wit of Mercutio, nor the reticence of Napoleon III. If pushed hard he will be constrained to admit that he has known each and all get angry without sufficient occasion, make at times the foolishest remarks, and act as if personal comfort were the highest thing in their estimation. Yet, driven thus to the wall, forced to make such uncomfortable confessions, our supposed man does not like his friends one whit the less; nay, more, he is aware that if they were very superior and faultless persons he would not be conscious of so much kindly feeling towards them. The tide of friendship does not rise high on the bank of perfection. Amiable weaknesses and shortcomings are the food of love. It is from the roughnesses and imperfect breaks in a man that you are able to lay hold of him. If a man be an entire and perfect chrysolite, you slide off him and fall back into ignorance. My friends are not perfect —no more am I—and so we suit each other ad-

mirably. Their weaknesses keep mine in countenance, and so save me from humiliation and shame. We give and take, bear and forbear; the stupidity they utter to-day salves the recollection of the stupidity I uttered yesterday; in their want of wit I see my own, and so feel satisfied and kindly disposed. It is one of the charitable dispensations of Providence that perfection is not essential to friendship. If I had to seek my perfect man, I should wander the world a good while, and when I found him, and was down on my knees before him, he would, to a certainty, turn the cold shoulder on me—and so life would be an eternal search, broken by the coldness of repulse and loneliness. Only to the perfect being in an imperfect world, or the imperfect being in a perfect world, is everything irretrievably out of joint.

On a certain shelf, in the bookcase which stands in the room in which I am at present sitting—bookcase surmounted by a white Dante, looking out with blind, majestic eyes—are collected a number of volumes which look somewhat the worse for wear. Those of them which originally possessed gilding have had it fingered off, each of them has leaves turned down, and

they open of themselves at places wherein I have been happy, and with whose every word I am familiar as with the furniture of the room in which I nightly slumber; each of them has remarks relevant and irrelevant scribbled on their margins. These favourite volumes cannot be called peculiar glories of literature; but out of the world of books have I singled them, as I have singled my intimates out of the world of men. I am on easy terms with them, and feel that they are no higher than my heart. Milton is not there, neither is Wordsworth; Shakespeare, if he had written comedies only, would have been there to a certainty, but the presence of the *five* great tragedies—Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Lear, Antony and Cleopatra—for this last should be always included among his supreme efforts—has made me place him on the shelf where the mighty men repose, himself the mightiest of all. Reading Milton is like dining off gold plate in a company of kings; very splendid, very ceremonious, and not a little appalling. Him I read but seldom, and only on high days and festivals of the spirit. Him I never lay down without feeling my appreciation increased for lesser men, never without the same kind

of comfort that one returning from the presence feels when he doffs respectful attitude and dress of ceremony, and subsides into old coat, familiar arm-chair, and slippers. After long-continued organ-music, the jangle of the Jew's harp is felt as an exquisite relief. With the volumes on the special shelf I have spoken of, I am quite at home, and I feel somehow as if they were at home with me. And as to-day the trees bend to the blast, and the rain comes in dashes against my window, and as I have nothing to do and cannot get out, and wish to kill the hours in as pleasant a manner as I can, I shall even talk about them, as in sheer liking a man talks about the trees in his garden, or the pictures on his wall. I can't expect to say anything very new or striking, but I can give utterance to sincere affection, and that is always pleasant to one's self and generally not ungrateful to others.

First, then, on this special shelf stands Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Twice-Told Tales." It is difficult to explain why I like these short sketches and essays, written in the author's early youth, better than his later, more finished, and better-known novels and romances. The world sets greater store by "The Scarlet Letter" and

"Transformation" than by this little book—and, in such matters of liking against the judgment of the world, there is no appeal. I think the reason of my liking consists in this—that the novels were written for the world, while the tales seem written for the author; in these he is actor and audience in one. Consequently, one gets nearer him, just as one gets nearer an artist in his first sketch than in his finished picture. And after all, one takes the greatest pleasure in those books in which a peculiar personality is most clearly revealed. A thought may be very commendable *as* a thought, but I value it chiefly as a window through which I can obtain insight on the thinker; and Mr Hawthorne's personality is peculiar, and specially peculiar in a new country like America. He is quiet, fanciful, quaint, and his humour is shaded by a certain meditativeness of spirit. Although a Yankee, he partakes of none of the characteristics of a Yankee. His thinking and his style have an antique air. His roots strike down through the visible mould of the present, and draw sustenance from the generations underground. The ghosts that haunt the chamber of his mind are the ghosts of dead men and women. He has a strong smack

of the Puritan; he wears around him, in the New-England town, something of the darkness and mystery of the aboriginal forest. He is a shy, silent, sensitive, much-ruminating man, with no special overflow of animal spirits. He loves solitude and the things which age has made reverent. There is nothing modern about him. Emerson's writing has a cold cheerless glitter, like the new furniture in a warehouse, which will come of use by and by; Hawthorne's, the rich, subdued colour of furniture in a Tudor mansion-house—which has winked to long-extinguished fires, which has been toned by the usage of departed generations. In many of the "Twice-Told Tales" this peculiar personality is charmingly exhibited. He writes of the street or the sea-shore, his eye takes in every object, however trifling, and on these he hangs comments melancholy and humorous. He does not require to go far for a subject; he will stare on the puddles in the street of a New-England village, and immediately it becomes a Mediterranean Sea with empires lying on its muddy shores. If the sermon be written out fully in your heart, almost any text will be suitable—if you have to find your sermon *in* your text, you may search the

Testament, New and Old, and be as poor at the close of Revelation as when you started at the first book of Genesis. Several of the papers which I like best are monologues, fanciful, humorous, or melancholy; and of these. my chief favourites are—"Sunday at Home," "Night Sketches," "Footprints on the Sea-shore," and the "Seven Vagabonds." This last seems to me almost the most exquisite thing which has flowed from its author's pen—a perfect little drama, the place a showman's waggon, the time the falling of a summer shower, full of subtle suggestions, which, if followed, will lead the reader away out of the story altogether; and illuminated by a grave, wistful kind of humour, which plays in turns upon the author's companions and upon the author himself. Of all Mr Hawthorne's gifts, this gift of humour—which would light up the skull and cross-bones of a village churchyard, which would be silent at a dinner-table—is to me the most delightful.

Then this writer has a strangely weird power. He loves ruins like the ivy, he skims the twilight like the bat, he makes himself a familiar of the phantoms of the heart and brain. He believes in ghosts; perhaps he has seen one burst on him

from the impalpable air. He is fascinated by the jarred brain and the ruined heart. Other men collect china, books, pictures, jewels, this writer collects singular human experiences, ancient wrongs and agonies, murders done on unfrequented roads, crimes that seem to have no motive, and all the dreary mysteries of the world of will. To his chamber of horrors Madame Tussaud's is nothing. With proud, prosperous, healthy men, Mr Hawthorne has little sympathy; he prefers a cracked piano to a new one, he likes cobwebs in the corner of his rooms. All this peculiar taste comes out strongly in the little book in whose praise I am writing. I read "The Minister's Black Veil," and find it the first sketch of the "Scarlet Letter." In "Wakefield"—the story of the man who left his wife, remaining away twenty years, but who yet looked upon her every day to appease his burning curiosity as to her manner of enduring his absence—I find the keenest analysis of an almost incomprehensible act. And then Mr Hawthorne has a skill in constructing allegories which no one of his contemporaries, either English or American, possesses. These allegorical papers may be read with pleasure, for their ingenuity, their

grace, their poetical feeling; but just as, gazing on the surface of a stream, admiring the ripples and eddies, and the widening rings made by the butterfly falling into it, you begin to be conscious that there is something at the bottom, and gradually a dead face wavers upwards from the oozy weeds, becoming every moment more clearly defined, so through Mr Hawthorne's graceful sentences, if read attentively, begins to flash the hidden meaning, a meaning, perhaps, the writer did not care to express formally and in set terms, and which he merely suggests and leaves the reader to make out for himself. If you have the book I am writing about, turn up "David Swan," "The Great Carbuncle," "The Fancy Show-box," and after you have read these, you will understand what I mean.

The next two books on my shelf—books at this moment leaning on the "Twice-Told Tales"—are Professor Aytoun's "Ballads of Scotland," and the "Lyra Germanica." These books I keep side by side with a purpose. The forms of existence with which they deal seem widely separated; but a strong kinship exists between them for all that. I open Professor Aytoun's

book, and all this modern life—with its railways, its newspapers, its crowded cities, its Lancashire distresses, its debates in Parliament—fades into nothingness and silence. Scotland, from Edinburgh Rock to the Tweed, stretches away in rude spaces of moor and forest. The wind blows across it, unpolluted by the smoke of towns. That which lives now has not yet come into existence; what are to-day crumbling and ivied ruins, are warm with household fires, and filled with human activities. Every Border keep is a home: brides are taken there in their blushes; children are born there; gray men, the crucifix held over them, die there. The moon dances on a plump of spears, as the moss-troopers, by secret and desert paths, ride over into England to lift a prey, and the balefire on the hill gives the alarm to Cumberland. Men live and marry, and support wife and little ones by steel-jacket and spear; and the Flower of Yarrow, when her larder is empty, claps a pair of spurs in her husband's platter. A time of strife and foray, of plundering and burning, of stealing and reaving; when hate waits half a life-time for revenge, and where difficulties are solved by the slash of a sword-blade. I open

the German book, and find a warfare conducted in a different manner. Here the Devil rides about wasting and destroying. Here temptations lie in wait for the soul; here pleasures, like glittering meteors, lure it into marshes and abysses. Watch and ward are kept here, and to sleep at the post is death. Fortresses are built on the rock of God's promises—inaccessible to the arrows of the wicked—and therein dwell many trembling souls. Conflict rages around, not conducted by Border spear on barren moorland, but by weapons of faith and prayer in the devout German heart;—a strife earnest as the other, with issues of life and death. And the resemblance between the books lies in this, that when we open them these past experiences and conditions of life gleam visibly to us far down like submerged cities—all empty and hollow now, though once filled with life as real as our own—through transparent waters.

In glancing over these German hymns, one is struck by their adaptation to the seasons and occurrences of ordinary life. Obviously, too, the writer's religion was not a Sunday matter only, it had its place in week-days as well. In

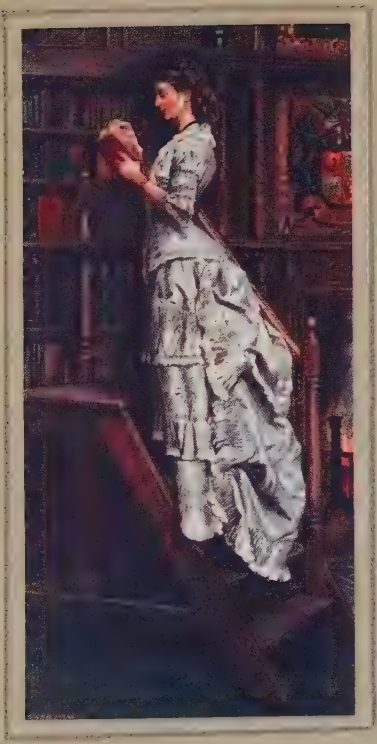
these hymns there is little gloom; a healthy human cheerfulness pervades many of them, and this is surely as it ought to be. These hymns, as I have said, are adapted to the occasions of ordinary life, and this speaks favourably of the piety which produced them. I do not suppose that we English are less religious than other nations, but we are undemonstrative in this, as in most things. We have the sincerest horror of over-dressing ourselves in fine sentiments. We are a little shy of religion. We give it a day entirely to itself, and make it a stranger to the other six. We confine it in churches, or in the closet at home, and never think of taking it with us to the street, or into our business, or with us to the festival, or the gathering of friends. Dr Arnold used to complain that he could get religious subjects treated in a masterly way, but could not get common subjects treated in a religious spirit. The Germans have done better; they have melted down the Sunday into the week. They have hymns embodying confessions of sin, hymns in the near prospect of death; and they have—what is more important—spiritual songs that may be sung by soldiers on the march, by the artisan at the

loom, by the peasant following his team, by the mother among her children, and by the maiden sitting at her wheel listening for the step of her lover. Religion is thus brought in to refine and hallow the sweet necessities and emotions of life, to cheer its weariness, and to exalt its sordidness. The German life revolves like the village festival with the pastor in the midst—joy and laughter and merry games do not fear the holy man, for he wears no unkindness in his eye, but his presence checks everything boisterous or unseemly—the rude word, the petulant act—and when it has run its course, he uplifts his hands and leaves his benediction on his children.

The "Lyra Germanica" contains the utterances of pious German souls in all conditions of life during many centuries. In it hymns are to be found written not only by poor clergymen, and still poorer precentors, by riband-manufacturers and shoemakers, who, amid rude environments, had a touch of celestial melody in their hearts, but by noble ladies and gentlemen, and crowned kings. The oldest in the collection is one written by King Robert of France about the year 1000. It is beautifully simple

and pathetic. State is laid aside with the crown, pride with the royal robe, and Lazarus at Dives' gate could not have written out of a lowlier heart. The kingly brow may bear itself high enough before men, the voice may be commanding and imperious enough, cutting through contradiction as with a sword, but before the Highest all is humbleness and bended knees. Other compositions there are, scattered through the volume, by great personages—several by Louisa Henrietta, Electress of Brandenburg, and Anton Ulrick, Duke of Brunswick—all written two hundred years ago. These are genuine poems, full of faith and charity, and calm trust in God. They are all dead now these noble gentlemen and gentlewomen; their warfare, successful or adverse, has been long closed, but they gleam yet in my fancy like the white effigies on tombs in dim cathedrals, the marble palms pressed together on the marble breast, the sword by the side of the knight, the psalter by the side of the lady, and flowing around them the scrolls on which are inscribed the texts of resurrection.

This book contains surely one of the most touching of human compositions—a song of



I am a sovereign

Luther's. The great Reformer's music resounds to this day in our churches; and one of the rude hymns he wrote has such a step of thunder in it, that the father of Frederick the Great, Mr Carlyle tells us, used to call it "God Almighty's Grenadier March." This one I speak of is of another mood, and is soft as tears. To appreciate it thoroughly, one must think of the burly, resolute, humorous, and withal tender-hearted man, and of the work he accomplished. He it was, the Franklin's kite, led by the highest hand, that went up into the papal thunder-cloud hanging black over Europe; and the angry fire that broke upon it burned it not, and in roars of boltless thunder the apparition collapsed, and the sun of truth broke through the inky fragments on the nations once again. He it was who, when advised not to trust himself in Worms, declared, "Although there be as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the house-tops, I will go." He it was who, when brought to bay in the splendid assemblage, said, "It is neither safe nor prudent to do aught against conscience. Here stand I—I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen." The rock cannot move—the lightnings may splinter it.

Think of these things, and then read Luther's "Christmas Carol," with its tender inscription, "Luther—written for his little son Hans, 1546." Coming from another pen, the stanzas were perhaps not much; coming from *his*, they move one like the finest eloquence. This song sunk deep into the hearts of the common people, and is still sung from the dome of the Kreuz Kirche in Dresden before daybreak on Christmas morning.

There is no more delightful reading in the world than these Scottish ballads. The mailed knight, the Border peel, the moonlight raid, the lady at her bower window—all these have disappeared from the actual world, and lead existence now as songs. Verses and snatches of these ballads are continually haunting and twittering about my memory, as in summer the swallows haunt and twitter about the eaves of my dwelling. I know them so well, and they meet a mortal man's experience so fully, that I am sure—with, perhaps, a little help from Shakespeare—I could conduct the whole of my business by quotation—do all its love-making, pay all its tavern scores, quarrel and make friends again in their words, far better

than I could in my own. If you know these ballads, you will find that they mirror perfectly your every mood. If you are weary and downhearted, behold, a verse starts to your memory trembling with the very sigh you have heaved. If you are merry, a stanza is dancing to the tune of your own mirth. If you love, be you ever so much a Romeo, here is the finest language for your using. If you hate, here are words which are daggers. If you like battle, here for two hundred years have trumpets been blowing and banners flapping. If you are dying, plentiful are the broken words here which have hovered on failing lips. Turn where you will, some fragment of a ballad is sure to meet you. Go into the loneliest places of experience and passion, and you discover that you are walking in human footprints. If you should happen to lift the first volume of Professor Aytoun's "Ballads of Scotland," the book of its own accord will open at "Clerk Saunders," and by that token you will guess that the ballad has been read and re-read a thousand times. And what a ballad it is! The story in parts is somewhat perilous to deal with, but with what instinctive delicacy the whole matter is managed! Then what

tragic pictures, what pathos, what manly and womanly love! Just fancy how the sleeping lovers, the raised torches, and the faces of the seven brothers looking on, would gleam on the canvas of Mr Millais!—

"'For in may come my seven bauld brothers,
Wi' torches burning bright.'

"It was about the midnight hour,
And they were fa'en asleep,
When in and came her seven brothers,
And stood at her bed feet.

"Then out and spake the first o' them,
'We'll awa' and let them be.'
Then out and spake the second o' them,
'His father has nae mair than he.'

"Then out and spake the third o' them,
'I wot they are lovers dear.'
Then out and spake the fourth o' them,
'They ha'e lo'ed for mony a year.'

"Then out and spake the fifth o' them,
'It were sin true love to twain.'
'Twere shame,' out spake the sixth o' them,
'To slay a sleeping man!'

"Then up and gat the seventh o' them,
And never a word spake he,
But he has striped his bright-brown brand
Through Saunders's fair bodie.

"Clerk Saunders he started, and Margaret she turn'd
Into his arms as asleep she lay,
And sad and silent was the night
That was atween thir twae."

Could a word be added or taken from these verses without spoiling the effect? You never think of the language, so vividly is the picture impressed on the imagination. I *see* at this moment the sleeping pair, the bright-burning torches, the lowering faces of the brethren, and the one fiercer and darker than the others.

Pass we now to the Second Part—

"Sae painfully she clam' the wa',
She clam' the wa' up after him;
Hosen nor shoon upon her feet
She had nae time to put them on.

"'Is there ony room at your head, Saunders?
Is there ony room at your feet?
Or ony room at your side, Saunders,
Where fain, fain I wad sleep?'"

In that last line the very heart-strings crack. She is to be pitied far more than Clerk Saunders, lying stark with the cruel wound beneath his side, the love-kisses hardly cold yet upon his lips.

It may be said that the books of which I have been speaking attain to the highest literary excellence by favour of simplicity and unconsciousness. Neither the German nor the Scotsman considered himself an artist. The Scot sings a successful foray, in which perhaps he was engaged, and he sings as he fought. In combat he did not dream of putting himself in a heroic position, or of flourishing his blade in a manner to be admired. A thrust of a lance would soon have finished him if he had. The pious German is overladen with grief, or touched by some blessing into sudden thankfulness, and he breaks into song as he laughs from gladness or groans from pain. This directness and naturalness give Scottish ballad and German hymn their highest charm. The poetic gold, if rough and unpolished, and with no elaborate devices carved upon it, is free at least from the alloy of conceit and simulation. Modern writers might, with benefit to themselves, barter some-

thing of their finish and dexterity for that pure innocence of nature, and child-like simplicity and fearlessness, full of its own emotion, and unthinking of others or of their opinions, which characterise these old writings.

The eighteenth century must ever remain the most brilliant and interesting period of English literary history. It is interesting not only on account of its splendour, but because it is so well known. We are familiar with the faces of its great men by portraits, and with the events of their lives by innumerable biographies. Every reader is acquainted with Pope's restless jealousy, Goldsmith's pitted countenance and plum-coloured coat, Johnson's surly manners and countless eccentricities, and with the tribe of poets who lived for months ignorant of clean linen, who were hunted by bailiffs, who smelt of stale punch, and who wrote descriptions of the feasts of the gods in twopenny cook-shops. Manners and modes of thought had greatly changed since the century before. Macbeth, in silk stockings and scarlet coat, slew King Duncan, and the pit admired the wild force occasionally exhibited by the barbarian Shakespeare. In those days the Muse wore patches,

and sat in a sumptuous boudoir, and her worshippers surrounded her in high-heeled shoes, ruffles, and powdered wigs. When the poets wished to paint nature, they described Chloe sitting on a green bank watching her sheep, or sighing when Strephon confessed his flame. And yet, with all this apparent shallowness, the age was earnest enough in its way. It was a good hater. It was filled with relentless literary feuds. Just recall the lawless state of things on the Scottish Border in the olden time—the cattle-lifting, the house-burning, the midnight murders, the powerful marauders, who, safe in numerous retainers and moated keep, bade defiance to law—recall this state of things, and imagine the quarrels and raids literary, the weapons satire and wit, and you have a good idea of the darker aspect of the time. There were literary bravoes, who hired themselves to assassinate reputations. There were literary reavers, who laid desolate at a foray a whole generation of wits. There were literary duels, fought out in grim hate to the very death. It was dangerous to interfere in the literary *melée*. Every now and then a fine gentleman was run through with a jest, or a foolish Mæcenas stabbed to the heart

with an epigram, and his foolishness settled for ever.

As a matter of course, on this special shelf of books will be found Boswell's "Life of Johnson," a work in our literature unique, priceless. That altogether unvenerable yet profoundly-venerating Scottish gentleman—that queerest mixture of qualities, of force and weakness, blindness and insight, vanity and solid worth —has written the finest book of its kind which our nation possesses. It is quite impossible to overstate its worth. You lift it, and immediately the intervening years disappear, and you are in the presence of the Doctor. You are made free of the last century, as you are free of the present. You double your existence. The book is a letter of introduction to a whole knot of departed English worthies. In virtue of Boswell's labours, we know Johnson—the central man of his time—better than Burke did, or Reynolds—far better even than Boswell did. We know how he expressed himself, in what grooves his thoughts ran, how he dressed, how he ate, drank, and slept. Boswell's unconscious art is wonderful, and so is the result attained. This book has arrested, as never book did before,

time and decay. Bozzy is really a wizard: he makes the sun stand still. Till his work is done, the future stands respectfully aloof. Out of ever-shifting time he has made fixed and permanent certain years, and in these Johnson talks and argues, while Burke listens, and Reynolds takes snuff, and Goldsmith, with hollowed hand, whispers a sly remark to his neighbour. There have they sat, these ghosts, for seventy years now, looked at and listened to by the passing generations; and there they still sit, the one voice going on! Smile at Boswell as we may, he was a spiritual phenomenon quite as rare as Johnson. More than most he deserves our gratitude. Let us hope that when next Heaven sends England a man like Johnson, a companion and listener like Boswell will be provided. The Literary Club sits for ever. What if the Mermaid were in like eternal session, with Shakespeare's laughter ringing through the fire and hail of wit!

By the strangest freak of chance or liking, the next book on my shelf contains the poems of Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn-law Rhymer. This volume, adorned by a hideous portrait in lithograph of the author, I can well remember picking up at a bookstall for a few pence many

years ago. It seems curious to me that this man is not in these days better known. A more singular man has seldom existed—seldom a more genuine. His first business speculation failed, but when about forty he commenced again, and this time fortune made amends for her former ill-treatment. His warehouse was a small, dingy place, filled with bars of iron, with a bust of Shakespeare looking down on the whole. His country-house contained busts of Achilles, Ajax, and Napoleon. Here is a poet who earned a competence as an iron-merchant; here is a monomaniac on the Corn-laws, who loved nature as intensely as ever did Burns or Wordsworth. Here is a John Bright uttering himself in fiery and melodious verse—Apollo with iron-dust on his face, wandering among the Sheffield knife-grinders! If you wish to form some idea of the fierce discontent which thirty years ago existed amongst the working men of England, you should read the Corn-law Rhymes. The Corn-laws are to him the twelve plagues of Egypt rolled together. On account of them, he denounces his country as the Hebrew prophets were wont to denounce Tyre and Sidon. His rage breaks out into curses, which are *not*

forgiveness. He is maddened by the memory of Peterloo. Never, perhaps, was a sane human being so tyrannised over by a single idea. A skeleton was found on one of the Derbyshire hills. Had the man been crossed in love? had he crept up there to die in presence of the stars? "Not at all," cries Elliot; "he was a victim of the Corn-laws, who preferred dying on the mountain-top to receiving parish pay." In his wild poem all the evil kings in Hades descend from their thrones when King George enters. They only let slip the dogs of war; *he* taxed the people's bread. "Sleep on, proud Britoness!" he exclaims over a woman at rest in the grave she had purchased. In one of his articles in *Tait's Magazine*, he seriously proposed that tragedies should be written shewing the evils of the Corn-laws, and that on a given night they should be performed in every theatre of the kingdom, so that the nation might, by the speediest possible process, be converted to the gospel of Free-trade. In his eyes the Corn-laws had gathered into their black bosoms every human wrong; repeal them, and lo! the new heavens and the new earth! A poor and shallow theory of the universe, you will say; but it is astonish-

ing what poetry he contrives to extract out of it. It is hardly possible, without quotation, to give an idea of the rage and fury which pervade these poems. He curses his political opponents with his whole heart and soul. He pillories them, and pelts them with dead cats and rotten eggs. The earnestness of his mood has a certain terror in it for meek and quiet people. His poems are of the angriest, but their anger is not altogether undivine. His scorn blisters and scalds, his sarcasm flays; but then outside nature is constantly touching him with a summer breeze or a branch of pink and white apple-blossom, and his mood becomes tenderness itself. He is far from being lachrymose; and when he is pathetic, he affects one as when a strong man sobs. His anger is not nearly so frightful as his tears. I cannot understand why Elliott is so little read. Other names not particularly remarkable I meet in the current reviews—his never. His book stands on my shelf but on no other have I seen it. This I think strange, because, apart from the intrinsic value of his verse *as* verse, it has an historical value. Evil times, and embittered feelings, now happily passed away, are preserved in his books,

like Pompeii and Herculaneum in Vesuvian lava. He was a poet of the poor, but in a quite peculiar sense. Burns, Crabbe, Wordsworth, were poets of the poor, but mainly of the peasant poor. Elliot is the poet of the English artizans—men who read newspapers and books, who are members of mechanics' institutes, who attend debating societies, who discuss political measures and political men, who are tormented by ideas—a very different kind of persons altogether. It is easier to find poetry beneath the blowing hawthorn than beneath the plumes of factory or furnace smoke. In such uninviting atmospheres Ebenezer Elliott found his; and I am amazed that the world does not hold it in greater regard, if for nothing else than for its singularity.

There is many another book on my shelf on which I might dilate, but this gossiping must be drawn to a close. When I began, the wind was bending the trees, and the rain came against the window in quick, petulant dashes. For hours now, wind and rain have ceased, the trees are motionless, the garden walk is dry. The early light of wintry sunset is falling across

my paper, and, as I look up, the white Dante opposite is dipped in tender rose. Less stern he looks, but not less sad, than he did in the morning. The sky is clear, and an arm of bleak pink vapour stretches up into its depths. The air is cold with frost, and the rain which those dark clouds in the east hold will fall during the night in silent, feathery flakes. When I wake to-morrow, the world will be changed, frosty forests will cover my bedroom panes, the tree branches will be furred with snows; and to the crumbs which it is my daily custom to sprinkle on the shrubbery walk will come the lineal descendant of the charitable red-breast that covered up with leaves the sleeping children in the wood.

THE LOVE OF BOOKS BY
RICHARD DE BURY

THE DESIRABLE TREASURE OF WISdom and science, which all men desire by an instinct of nature, infinitely surpasses all the riches of the world; in respect of which precious stones are worthless; in comparison with which silver is as clay and pure gold is as a little sand; at whose splendour the sun and moon are dark to look upon; compared with whose marvellous sweetness honey and manna are bitter to the taste. O value of wisdom that fadeth not away with time, virtue ever flourishing, that cleanseth its possessor from all venom! O heavenly gift of the divine bounty, descending from the Father of lights, that thou mayest exalt the rational soul to the very heavens! Thou art the celestial nourishment of the intellect, which those who eat shall still hunger and those who drink shall still thirst, and the gladdening harmony of the languishing soul which he that hears shall never be confounded. Thou art the moderator and rule of morals, which he who follows shall not sin. By thee kings reign and princes decree justice. By thee, rid of their native rudeness, their minds and tongues being polished, the thorns of vice be-

ing torn up by the roots, those men attain high places of honour, and become fathers of their country, and companions of princes, who without thee would have melted their spears into pruning-hooks and ploughshares, or would perhaps be feeding swine with the prodigal.

Where dost thou chiefly lie hidden, O most elect treasure! and where shall thirsting souls discover thee?

Certes, thou hast placed thy tabernacle in books, where the Most High, the Light of lights, the Book of Life, has established thee. There everyone who asks receiveth thee, and everyone who seeks finds thee, and to everyone that knocketh boldly it is speedily opened. Therein the cherubim spread out their wings, that the intellect of the students may ascend and look from pole to pole, from the east and west, from the north and from the south. Therein the mighty and incomprehensible God Himself is apprehensibly contained and worshipped; therein is revealed the nature of things celestial, terrestrial, and infernal; therein are discerned the laws by which every state is administered, the offices of the celestial hierarchy are distinguished, and the tyrannies of demons

described, such as neither the ideas of Plato transcend, nor the chair of Crato contained.

In books I find the dead as if they were alive; in books I foresee things to come; in books warlike affairs are set forth; from books come forth the laws of peace. All things are corrupted and decay in time; Saturn ceases not to devour the children that he generates; all the glory of the world would be buried in oblivion, unless God had provided mortals with the remedy of books.

Alexander, the conqueror of the earth, Julius, the invader of Rome and of the world, who, the first in war and arts, assumed universal empire under his single rule, faithful Fabricius and stern Cato, would now have been unknown to fame, if the aid of books had been wanting. Towers have been razed to the ground; cities have been overthrown; triumphal arches have perished from decay; nor can either pope or king find any means of more easily conferring the privilege of perpetuity than by books. The book that he has made renders its author this service in return, that so long as the book survives its author remains immortal and cannot die, as Ptolemy declares in the Prologue to his

Almagest: He is not dead, he says, who has given life to science.

Who therefore will limit by anything of another kind the price of the infinite treasure of books, from which the scribe who is instructed bringeth forth things new and old? Truth that triumphs over all things, which overcomes the king, wine, and women, which it is reckoned holy to honour before friendship, which is the way without turning and the life without end, which holy Boethius considers to be threefold in thought, speech, and writing, seems to remain more usefully and to fructify to greater profit in books. For the meaning of the voice perishes with the sound; truth latent in the mind is wisdom that is hid and treasure that is not seen; but truth which shines forth in books desires to manifest itself to every impressionable sense. It commends itself to the sight when it is read, to the hearing when it is heard, and moreover in a manner to the touch, when it suffers itself to be transcribed, bound, corrected, and preserved. The undisclosed truth of the mind, although it is the possession of the noble soul, yet because it lacks a companion, is not certainly known to be delightful,

while neither sight nor hearing takes account of it. Further the truth of the voice is patent only to the ear and eludes the sight, which reveals to us more of the qualities of things, and linked with the subtlest of motions begins and perishes as it were in a breath. But the written truth of books, not transient but permanent, plainly offers itself to be observed, and by means of the pervious spherules of the eyes, passing through the vestibule of perception and the courts of imagination, enters the chamber of intellect, taking its place in the couch of memory, where it engenders the eternal truth of the mind.

Finally we must consider what pleasantness of teaching there is in books, how easy, how secret! How safely we lay bare the poverty of human ignorance to books without feeling any shame! They are masters who instruct us without rod or ferule, without angry words, without clothes or money. If you come to them they are not asleep; if you ask and inquire of them they do not withdraw themselves; they do not chide if you make mistakes; they do not laugh at you if you are ignorant. O books, who alone are liberal and free, who give to all who ask of you

and enfranchise all who serve you faithfully! by how many thousand types are ye commended to learned men in the Scriptures given us by inspiration of God! For ye are the minds of profoundest wisdom, to which the wise man sends his son that he may dig out treasures: Prov. ii. Ye are the wells of living waters, which father Abraham first digged, Isaac digged again, and which the Philistines strive to fill up: Gen. xxvi. Ye are indeed the most delightful ears of corn, full of grain, to be rubbed only by apostolic hands, that the sweetest food may be produced for hungry souls: Matt. xii. Ye are the golden pots in which manna is stored, and rocks flowing with honey, nay, combs of honey, most plenteous udders of the milk of life, garners ever full; ye are the tree of life and the fourfold river of Paradise, by which the human mind is nourished, and the thirsty intellect is watered and refreshed. Ye are the ark of Noah and the ladder of Jacob, and the troughs by which the young of those who look therein are coloured; ye are the stones of testimony and the pitchers holding the lamps of Gideon, the scrip of David, from which the smoothest stones are taken for the slaying of Goliath. Ye are the golden ves-

sels of the temple, the arms of the soldiers of the Church with which to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, fruitful olives, vines of Engadi, fig-trees that are never barren, burning lamps always to be held in readiness---and all the noblest comparisons of Scripture may be applied to books, if we choose to speak in figures.

Since the degree of affection a thing deserves depends upon the degree of its value, and the previous paragraphs show that the value of books is unspeakable, it is quite clear to the reader what is the probable conclusion from this. I say probable, for in moral science we do not insist upon demonstration, remembering that the educated man seeks such degree of certainty as he perceives the subject-matter will bear, as Aristotle testifies in the first book of his Ethics. For Tully does not appeal to Euclid, nor does Euclid rely upon Tully. This at all events we endeavour to prove, whether by logic or rhetoric, that all riches and all delights whatsoever yield place to books in the spiritual mind, wherein the Spirit which is charity ordereth charity. Now in the first place, because wisdom is contained in books more than all mortals un-

derstand, and wisdom thinks lightly of riches, as the foregoing chapter declares. Furthermore, Aristotle, in his Problems, determines the question, why the ancients proposed prizes to the stronger in gymnastic and corporeal contests, but never awarded any prize for wisdom. This question he solves as follows: In gymnastic exercises the prize is better and more desirable than that for which it is bestowed; but it is certain that nothing is better than wisdom: wherefore no prize could be assigned for wisdom. And therefore neither riches nor delights are more excellent than wisdom. Again, only the fool will deny that friendship is to be preferred to riches, since the wisest of men testifies this; but the chief of philosophers honours truth before friendship, and the truthful Zorobabel prefers it to all things. Riches, then, are less than truth. Now truth is chiefly maintained and contained in holy books—nay, they are written truth itself, since by books we do not now mean the materials of which they are made. Wherefore riches are less than books, especially as the most precious of all riches are friends, as Boethius testifies in the second book of his *Consolation*; to whom the truth of books according

to Aristotle is to be preferred. Moreover, since we know that riches first and chiefly appertain to the support of the body only, while the virtue of books is the perfection of reason, which is properly speaking the happiness of man, it appears that books to the man who uses his reason are dearer than riches. Furthermore, that by which the faith is more easily defended, more widely spread, more clearly preached, ought to be more desirable to the faithful. But this is the truth written in books, which our Saviour plainly showed, when he was about to contend stoutly against the Tempter, girding himself with the shield of truth and indeed of written truth, declaring "it is written" of what he was about to utter with his voice.

And, again, no one doubts that happiness is to be preferred to riches. But happiness consists in the operation of the noblest and diviner of the faculties that we possess—when the whole mind is occupied in contemplating the truth of wisdom, which is the most delectable of all our virtuous activities, as the prince of philosophers declares in the tenth book of the Ethics, on which account it is that philosophy is held to have wondrous pleasures in respect of purity

and solidity, as he goes on to say. But the contemplation of truth is never more perfect than in books, where the act of imagination perpetuated by books does not suffer the operation of the intellect upon the truths that it has seen to suffer interruption. Wherefore books appear to be the most immediate instruments of speculative delight, and therefore Aristotle, the sun of philosophic truth, in considering the principles of choice, teaches that in itself to philosophize is more desirable than to be rich, although in certain cases, as where for instance one is in need of necessaries, it may be more desirable to be rich than to philosophize.

Moreover, since books are the aptest teachers, as the previous chapter assumes, it is fitting to bestow on them the honour and the affection that we owe to our teachers. In fine since all men naturally desire to know, and since by means of books we can attain the knowledge of the ancients, which is to be desired beyond all riches, what man living according to nature would not feel the desire of books? And although we know that swine trample pearls under foot, the wise man will not therefore be deterred from gathering the pearls that lie before

him. A library of wisdom, then, is more precious than all wealth, and all things that are desirable cannot be compared to it. Whoever therefore claims to be zealous of truth, of happiness, of wisdom or knowledge, aye, even of the faith, must needs become a lover of books.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF BOOKS
BY F. D. MAURICE

ABRIDGED

THE FRIENDSHIP OF BOOKS

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I WANT TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT A few books which exhibit very transparently, I think, what sort of a person he was who wrote them, which show *him* to us. I think we shall find that there is the charm of the book, the worth of the book. He may be writing about a great many things; but there is a man who writes; and when you get acquainted with that man, you get acquainted with the book. It is no more a collection of letters and leaves; it is a *friend*.

I mean to speak entirely, or almost entirely, of English books. And I shall begin with a writer who seems to offer a great exception to the remark I have just made. If I thought he was really an exception, I should be much puzzled, or rather I should give up my position altogether. For, since he is the greatest and the best known of all English authors, for him to be an instance against me would be a clear proof that I was wrong. We continually hear this observation, "William Shakespeare is not to be found in any of his plays." It is his great and wonderful distinction that he is not. Othello speaks his word, Hamlet his, Bottom the Weaver, his; Des-

demona, Imogen, Portia, each her word. But Shakespeare does not intrude himself into any of their places; he does not want us to know what he thought about this matter or that. If you look into one corner or another for him, he is not there. It would appear, then, according to my maxim, as if Shakespeare could never be his reader's friend. It would appear as if he were the great precedent for all newspaper writers and reviewers, as if he were overlooking mankind just as they do, and had the best possible right to describe himself as a *We* and not as an *I*.

Well, that sounds very plausible, and, like everything that sounds plausible, there is a truth at the bottom of it. But that the truth is not this, I think the feeling and judgment of the people of England (I might say of the continents of Europe and of America) might convince you, without any arguments of mine. For they have been so sure that there was a William Shakespeare, they were so certain that he had a local habitation and a name, that they have rummaged parish registers, hunted Doctors' Commons for wills, made pilgrimages, to Stratford-upon-Avon, put together traditions about old houses

and shops, that they might make, if possible, some clear image of him in their minds. I do not know that they have succeeded very well. The facts of his biography are few. A good deal of imagination has been needed to put them together, and to fill up the blanks in them. I do not suppose registers, or wills, or old houses, will give many more answers concerning him. But that only shows, I think, how very clear a witness his own works give, even when the outward information is ever so scanty, of the man that he was, and of the characteristics which distinguished him from his fellows. If you ask me how I reconcile this assertion with the undoubted fact that he does not put himself forward as other dramatists do, and give his own opinions instead of allowing the persons of his drama to utter theirs, I should answer, Have you found that the man who is in the greatest hurry to tell you all that he thinks about all possible things, is the friend that is best worth knowing? Have you found that the one who talked most about himself and his own doings is the most worth knowing? Do you not generally become rather exhausted with men of his kind? Do not you say sometimes, in Shakespeare's own words, or

rather in Falstaff's, "I do see to the bottom of this same Justice Shallow; he has told me all he has to tell. There is no reserve in him, nothing that is worth searching after"? On the other hand, have you not met with some men who very rarely spoke about their own impressions and thoughts, who seldom laid down the law, and yet who, you were sure, had a fund of wisdom within, and who made you partakers of it by the light which they threw on the earth in which they were dwelling, especially by the kindly, humorous, pathetic way in which they interested you about your fellow-men, and made you acquainted with them? I do not say that this is the only class of friends which one would wish for. One likes to have some who in quiet moments are more directly communicative about their own sufferings and struggles. But certainly you would not say that men of the other class are not very pleasant, and very profitable. Of this class Shakespeare is the most remarkable specimen. Instead of being a Reviewer who sits above the universe, and applies his own narrow rules to the members of it, he throws himself with the heartiest and most genial sympathy into the feelings of all, he under-

stands their position and circumstances, he perceives how each must have been affected by them. Instead of being a big, imaginary *we*, he is so much of a man himself that he can enter into the manhood of people who are the farthest off from him, and with whom he has the least to do. And so, I believe, his books may become most valuable friends to us—to us especially who ought to be acquainted with what is going on with all kinds of people. Every now and then, I think (especially perhaps in the characters of Hamlet and of Prospero), one discovers signs how Shakespeare as an individual man had fought and suffered. I quite admit, however, that his main work is not to do this, but to help us in knowing ourselves—the past history of our land, the people we are continually meeting. And any book that does this is surely a friend.

Before I leave Shakespeare, I would speak of the way in which he made friends with books. Perhaps I can do it best by comparing his use of them with the use which was made of them by a very clever and accomplished contemporary of his. Ben Jonson, though he was the son of a bricklayer, made himself a thoroughly good

Latin and Greek scholar. He read the best Latin books, and the commentaries which illustrated them; he wrote two plays on subjects taken from Roman history. Very striking subjects they were. The hero of one was Catiline, who tried to overthrow the social order of the Republic; the hero of the other was Sejanus, who represents, by his grandeur and his fall, the very character and spirit of the Empire in the days of Tiberius. In dealing with these subjects, Ben Jonson had the help of two of the greatest Roman authors, both of them possessing remarkable powers of narration, one of them a man of earnest character, subtle insight, deep reflection. Though few men in his day understood these authors, and the government and circumstances of Rome, better than Jonson, though he was a skilful and experienced play-writer, most readers are glad when they have got Catiline and Sejanus fairly done with. They do not find that they have received any distinct impressions from them of Roman life; to learn what it was they must go to the authors whom he has copied. Shakespeare wrote three plays on Roman subjects—Coriolanus, Julius Cæsar, Antony and Cleopatra. He knew very little of Lat-

in, and the materials he had to work with were a tolerable translation of Livy's "History," and a capital one of Plutarch's "Lives." With no aid but these, and his knowledge of Warwickshire peasants and London citizen's, he has taught us more of the Romans—he has made us more at home in the city, and at their fireside, than the best historians who lived upon the soil are able to do. Jonson studied their books; Shakespeare made friends with them. He did just the same with our old Chronicles. He read of King John, of Richard II., of John of Gaunt, of Harry of Lancaster, of Hotspur and Owen Glendower, of the good Humphrey of Gloucester and the dark Cardinal Beaufort, of Wolsey and of Catherine. He read of them, and they stood up before him, real armed men, or graceful sorrowing women. Instead of being dead letters they all became living persons; not appearing in solitary grandeur, but forming groups; not each with a fixed immovable nature, but acted upon and educated by all the circumstances of their times; not dwelling in an imaginary world, but warmed by the sun of Italy, or pinched by the chilly nights of Denmark—essentially men such as are to be found in all countries and in all ages,

and therefore exhibiting all the varieties of temperament and constitution which belong to each age, and to each country.

I might speak of other books in this bookish time of James I., which many of us have found valuable and genial friends; as for instance the poems of George Herbert, which nobody that ever reads them can think of merely as poems; they are so completely the utterances of the heart of an affectionate, faithful, earnest man, they speak so directly to whatever is best in ourselves, and give us such friendly and kindly admonitions about what is worst. But I must go on to the next period, which was a period of action and strife, when men could no more regard writing books, or even reading them, as an amusement; when the past must be studied for the sake of the present, or not at all. John Milton belongs to that time. He was the most learned of all our poets, the one who from his childhood upwards was a devourer of Greek and Latin books, of the romances of the Middle Ages, of French and Italian poetry, above all of the Hebrew Scriptures. All these became his friends; for all of them connected themselves with the thoughts that occupied men in his own time,

with the deep religious and political controversies which were about to bring on a civil war. Many persons think that the side which he took in that war must hinder us from making his books our friends; that we may esteem him as a great poet, but that we cannot meet him cordially as a man. No one is more likely to entertain that opinion than an English clergyman, for Milton dealt his blows unsparingly enough, and we come in for at least our full share of them. I know all that, and yet I must confess that I have found him a friend, and a very valuable friend, even when I have differed from him most and he has made me smart most. It does not strike me that on the whole we profit most by friends who flatter us. We may be stirred up to the recollection of our duty to those who speak stern and terrible words, of us, and of our class. If we are persuaded that they are utterly wrong in condemning the institutions to which we are attached, we may often admit that they are very right in condemning us for the sins which hinder men from seeing the worth of those institutions. I do not know anyone who makes us feel more than Milton does the grandeur of the ends which we ought to keep always before us, and

therefore our own pettiness and want of courage and nobleness in pursuing them.

I would rather converse with him as a friend than talk of him as a poet; because then we put ourselves into a position to receive the best wisdom which he has to give us, and that wisdom helps to purge away whatever dross is mingled with it; whereas if we merely contemplate him at a distance as a great genius, we shall receive some powerful influence from him, but we shall not be in a condition to compare one thing that he says to us with another. And there is no writer whose books more force upon us the thought of him as a person than Milton's. There are few passages in his prose writings, full as they are of gorgeous passages, more beautiful than that in which he defends himself from the charge of entering from choice or vanity into controversies, by alleging the far different object and kind of writing to which from his youth upwards he had desired to devote himself. And in his latest poem of "Samson Agonistes," where what he had learnt from the play-writers of Greece is wonderfully raised, and mellowed, and interpreted by what he had learnt from the Old Testament, he himself speaks to us in every line. He

transfers himself to the prison of Samson in Gaza; he is the blind, downcast, broken man whom God appears to have cast off. The thought of God as the Deliverer gives him a consolation which nothing else can give; he looks forward to some triumph which God will give to his race, as the only hope for himself.

I have dwelt some time upon these "friends," because Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, are the greatest names in our literature, and therefore it was important for my purpose to show you that their books do fulfil the purpose which I have said all books ought to fulfil. I might very fairly have gone back, and spoken to you of older writers than these. I might have spoken of the time of our Edward III., and have given you some proofs that our first poet, Chaucer, was a cordial, genial, friendly man, who could tell us a great many things which we want to know about his own time, and could also break down the barrier between his time and ours, and make us feel, that, though our dress may be very much unlike theirs, and our houses a good deal better, and our language a little less French, yet that on the whole our fathers worked at much the same trades as we do, fell into

the same kind of sins, looked up at the same skies, had the same wants in their hearts, and required that they should be satisfied in the same way. I might have spoken to you also of some of the men who flourished at the time of the Reformation—of Latimer, for instance, whose broad, simple, humorous sermons address themselves to all the common sympathies of Englishmen, and are as free from starch and buckram as anyone could wish. I might have spoken to you also of some of Shakespeare's contemporaries, especially of that delightful and instructive companion, Spencer's "Faery Queen," which makes us feel that without stepping a yard from our native English ground, or deserting any of our common occupations, we may be, ay, and must be, engaged in a great fight with invisible enemies, and that we have invisible champions on our side. But as I have not time to speak of many books . . . . . I have passed over these, and have begun at once with those which, for one reason or another, people are most likely to think of as having claims upon their respect rather than upon their friendship. That must be my reason too for not dwelling upon a book belonging to Mil-

ton's time, which many people would at once recognise as a delightful friend; I mean Izaak Walton's "Angler." Knowing nothing of his craft, I should only betray my ignorance by entering upon it, and should lessen the pleasure which some of you, I dare say, have received from its quiet descriptions, and devout reflections. But I am glad to remember that there is such a book in our libraries even if I understand very little of it, because it is one of the links between the life of the woods and streams and the life of the study, which it would be a great misfortune for us to lose.

If you take up the *Spectator*, or the *Guardian*, your first feeling is that the writers in it wish to cultivate your friendship. They have thrown off the stiff manners of those who reckon it their chief business to write books; at the same time they do not affect to be men of the world despising books. Their object is to bring books and people of the world into a good understanding with each other; to make fine ladies and gentlemen somewhat wiser and better behaved by feeding them with good and wholesome literature; to show the student what things are going on about him, that he may not be a mere ped-

ant and recluse. I do not mean that this was the deliberate purpose of Addison and Steele. It was the natural effect of their position that they took this course. They had been educated as scholars; they entered into civil life, and became members of Parliament. The two characters were mixed in them, and when they wrote books they could not help showing that they knew something of men. The two men were well fitted to work together. Addison had the calmer and clearer intellect; he had inherited a respect for English faith and morality. Steele, with a more wavering conduct, had perhaps even more reverence in his inmost heart for goodness. Between them they appeared just formed to give a turn to the mind of their age; not presenting to society a very heroical standard, but raising it far above the level to which it had sunk, and is apt to sink.

The *Spectator* and the *Guardian* have sometimes been called the beginning of our periodical literature. Perhaps they are; but they are very unlike what we describe by that name in our day. There is no *we* in them. Though the papers have letters of the alphabet, and not names, put to them, and though they profess to

be members of a club, each writer calls himself *I*. You can hardly conceive what a difference it would make in the pleasure with which you read any paper, if the singular pronoun were changed for the plural. The good-humour of the writing would evaporate immediately. You would no longer find that you were in the presence of a kindly, friendly observer, who was going about with you, and pointing out to you this folly of the town, and that pleasant characteristic of a country gentleman's life. All would be the dry, hard criticism of some distant being, who did not take you into his counsels at all, but merely told you what you were to think or not to think. And with the good-humour, what we call the *humour* when we do not prefix the adjective to it, would also disappear.

But though one may have a very pleasant and useful conversation with this kind-hearted *Spectator* now and then, I do not think that such conversation would brace one to the hard work of life, or would enable one to sympathise with those who are engaged in it. We must remember that a very considerable majority of the world do not ride in coaches, as nearly all those we read of in the *Spectator* do; that to

earn bread by the sweat of the brow is the common heritage to the sons of Adam, and that it is a great misfortune not to understand that necessity, even if circumstances have exempted us from it. For that reason some of us may welcome another friend, far less happy and genial than Addison, often very rough and cross-grained, with rude inward affection. Old Samuel Johnson had none of Addison's soft training. He had nothing to do with the House of Commons, except as a contraband reporter; he had not the remotest chance of being a Secretary of State even if he had not been a fierce Tory, and in the reign of George II. all but a Jacobite. With only booksellers for his patrons, obliged to seek his bread from hand to mouth by writing for them what they prescribed, with a bad digestion, a temper anything but serene, a faith certainly as earnest as Addison's but which contemplated its objects on the dark and not on the sunny side, he offers the greatest contrast one can conceive to the happy well-conditioned man of whom I have just been speaking. The opposition between them is all the more remarkable because the *Rambler* was formed on the model of the *Spectator* and be-

cause Johnson as much as Addison belongs to what ought to be called the Club period of English literature.

In that world Johnson flourished even more than Addison. The latter is accused by Pope of giving his little senate laws; but Johnson's senate contained many great men who yet listened to his oracles with reverence. And those oracles were not delivered in sentences of three clauses ending in a long word in "tion," like those papers in the *Rambler* which are so well parodied in the "Rejected Addresses." But I cannot admit that Johnson's most inflated sentences contain mere wind. He had something to put into them; they did express what he felt, and what he was, better than simpler, more English, more agreeable ones would have done. He adopted them naturally; they are part of himself; if we want to be acquainted with him, we must not find fault with them. And when he is describing scenes, as in "Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia," he is often quite free and picturesque; when he is writing about business, as in his "Falkland Island," he does not let his eloquence, which in that book is often very splendid, hinder him from being pointed and direct

in his blows. In his club no one could speak with more straightness, wasting no words, but bringing out the thing he wants to say in the strongest and most distinct dress that could be found. One may not agree in half of the opinions he expresses, and may think that he delivers them very dogmatically. If one looked either at his writings or at Boswell's Life of him merely as books, one would go away very discontented and very angry; but when one thinks of both as exhibiting to us a man, the case becomes altogether different.

There are two members of Johnson's club to each of whom he was sincerely attached, and who were attached to each other, though in their habits, occupations, talents, modes of thinking, they were as unlike him, and unlike each other, as any two men could be. They had, indeed, a common origin—Oliver Goldsmith and Edmund Burke were both Irishmen. But Goldsmith carried his country about with him wherever he went; he was always blundering, and reckless, and good-natured. Burke only showed where he had been born by his zeal for the improvement of his country whenever its affairs came under discussion. I believe that

these two men, with the vast differences that there are between them, may both become our friends, and that we shall not thoroughly enjoy the "Deserted Village," or the "Vicar of Wakefield," or the "Speeches on American Taxation," or the "Reflections on the French Revolution," unless they do. All Goldsmith's friends were always scolding him, laughing at him, and learning from him. They found that he had a fund of knowledge which he had picked up they could not tell how, but apparently by sympathising with all the people that he came into contact with, and so getting to be really acquainted with them. He compiled histories without much learning about the people he was writing of; yet he did not make them false or foolish, because he had more notion than many diligent historians have of what men must be like in any latitudes. In his poetry he never goes out of his depth; he speaks of things which he has seen and felt himself, and so it tells us of him if it does not tell us of much else. In spite of all his troubles he is as good-natured as Addison; only he mixed with a different class of people from Addison, and can tell us of country vicars and their wives and daughters,

though he may not know much of a Sir Roger de Coverley. His books, I think, must be always pleasant, as well as profitable, friends, provided we do not expect from them, as we ought not to expect from any friend, more than they profess to give.

Burke is a friend of another order. Johnson said of him that if you met him under a gateway in a shower of rain you must perceive that he was a remarkable man. I do not think we can take up the most insignificant fragment of the most insignificant speech or pamphlet he ever put forth, without arriving at the same conviction. But he does what is better than make us acknowledge him as a remarkable man. He makes us acknowledge that we are small men, that we have talked about subjects of which we had little knowledge, and the principles of which we had imperfectly sounded.

He told the electors of Bristol that they might reject him if they pleased, but that he should maintain his position as an English statesman and an honest man. They did reject him, of course, but his speech remains as a model for all true men to follow, as a warning to all who adopt another course, that they

may make friends for the moment, but that they will not have a friend in their own conscience, and that their books, if they leave any, will be no friends to those who read them in the times to come.

Away from the club in which Johnson, Burke, and Goldsmith were wont to meet, in a little village in Buckinghamshire, dwelt another poet, who was not uninterested in their doings, and who had in his youth mixed with London wits. William Cowper inspired much friendship among men, and still more among women, during his lifetime; they found him the pleasantest of all companions in his bright hours, and they did not desert him in his dark hours. His books have been friends to a great many since he left the earth, because they exhibit him very faithfully in both; some of his letters and some of his poems being full of mirth and quiet gladness, some of them revealing awful struggles and despair. Whatever estimate may be formed of his poetry in comparison with that of earlier or later writers, everyone must feel that his English is that of a scholar and a gentleman—that he had the purest enjoyment of domestic life, and of what one may call the

domestic or still life of nature. One is sure also that he had the most earnest faith, which he cherished for others when he could find no comfort in it for himself. These would be sufficient explanations of the interest which he has awakened in so many simple and honest readers who turn to books for sympathy and fellowship, and do not like a writer at all the worse because he also demands their sympathy with him.

ON THE BUYING OF BOOKS BY A BOOKWORM

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THE LOVER OF BOOKS MAY BE DISTINGUISHED by one trick he has which betrayeth him. If he is in a strange house he makes straight for the shelves: before anything else he hastens to take stock of the library; blue china cannot turn him aside, nor pictures detain him. There are other peculiarities by which he may be known. If he passes a bookseller's shop he may not choose but stop; if it is a second-hand shop, which is at all times more interesting than a shop of new books, his feet without any volition on his part and of their own accord draw him within it. However poor he is, his shelves grow continually larger and groan more deeply with new additions. However large his own library may be, every other man's library is an object of curiosity to him for the strange and unknown wonders it may possess.

I, who write this paper, am one of these lovers of books. I love them beyond all other earthly things. I love them because they are books, good and bad alike. To me they are as living things, and possess a soul. It gives me a glow of pleasure, even after many years of experience, to buy a new book. To carry it home,

cut the leaves, turn over the pages and look in it here and there is joy enough to last the whole evening. At such a time one does not curiously criticise the contents: one enjoys the fresh aroma of new print—I believe it is caused by the use of "turps"; one is grateful to the author and the publisher; there is a charm about the binding; the very type has a beauty of its own. In the morning when the daily paper comes I pass over the foolish politics, the speeches, the enthusiasm of the idiotic multitude who expect any good thing, any improvement for themselves, from the "Mouthy One," the "Blether-er," the "Snarler," or the "Bawler," the "Brawler," the "Down-Crier," the "Common Liar," or the "Promiscuous Promiser"—I believe politicians may nearly all be divided into these classes—and I turn straight to the advertisements of new books and the reviews. As for the former, they are copious enough to inflame the least ardent imagination; and as for the latter, they are meagre enough to infuriate the most patient of publishers. Every wretched little farce stolen from the French and put upon the boards is counted worthy of serious discussion in a half-column all to itself, even when

the House is quarrelling the whole night long; yet, for books, we must fain put up with "Current Literature" ladled out as if it was so much padding, put in when there was nothing of real interest or importance. Why cannot one paper at least have the courage to say, "Messieurs les Abonneé, we have too long neglected the interests of literature; henceforth there shall be for every day in the year, a whole column specially devoted to the publishers; and the contents of that column shall be provided for you by just, honest, and God-fearing men, if any such yet remain." Would it pay that paper to do this great and beneficent thing for literature? I venture to think it would. People would begin to look for it day after day; curiosity would be awakened; the literary taste of the public would be cultivated. As for myself, I should certainly take that paper and so would all those who are like minded with me. But as no daily paper exists which cares for literature, my favourite reading is the *Athenæum*, and next to that, I prefer the latter half of the *Saturday*. For good instructive reading give me, in addition to these comparatively incomplete organs, one of which admits sci-

ence, and the other politics, the *Publishers' Circular*.

My wanderings among other people's libraries have led me to make a few discoveries which may or may not be original. Thus, I have laid down the general maxim that, as is the average man, so is the average library. I look not, therefore, for aught beyond the commonplace. Bookshelves are made to match their owner; the books upon them are a counterpart to the man who possesses them. Thus a beautiful harmony reigns in this as well as in other departments of nature. I am tempted to believe that after learning the profession of a man, studying his face, dress, and bearing, and hearing him talk for a single quarter of an hour, I should be able to tell, within a dozen books or so, all that he has ever bought. The converse of this proposition is certainly true, namely, that a very short examination of a library is sufficient to enable one to describe the owner in general and unmistakable terms. For the fact is, although it humiliates one to state it baldly and openly, and though it makes one tremble at thinking of the monotony of human nature and the dreadful sameness of men's minds, there are to be found a-

mong the "better sort"—a phrase I love because it beautifully connects virtue with wealth—but two or three classes or descriptions of library.

Everyone, for instance, knows the great, solid mahogany bookcase—perhaps two or three such cases—filled from top to bottom with inherited books which once belonged to a scholar of the family long deceased. Among these are old college prizes bound in Russia, stamped with college arms. These are editions of the classics; there are the "standard" works of Hume, Robertson, Gibbon, Alison, Paley, Young, Hervey (his "Meditations,") Johnson, and perhaps those sound and judicious divines, Andrews, Hooker, Bull, and Jeremy Taylor. All those books of the original collection which were not handsomely bound have long since been sent away and sold at a shilling the volume, sorted out. Those with leather backs were retained to stand in rows, and act as furniture; they are but the dry bones, the skeleton of the old library; for they were formerly the books of reference, the necessaries of the life and the daily work of the defunct scholar, who lived in his library. But the soul of his collection is gone: the duo-

decimoes which he read in daily, the tattered old volumes which helped his research and stimulated his thought, the actual food of his brain—these have vanished; what is left is a mere shell. This is the Furniture Library. None of these books are ever taken down; none are opened or read; the library is like a marble statue which lacks the breath of life, or a sealed fountain whose waters are drunk by neither man or beast.

A pretty allegory might be made showing how a certain Pygmalion collected together a divine library, so beautiful, so perfect, so harmonious in all its parts, that he who made it and gazed upon it was straightway smitten with a passion which made his heart to beat and his cheek to glow; and how presently the library became alive to him, a beneficent being, full of love and tender thought, as good as she was beautiful, a friend who never failed him; and how they were united in holy wedlock and lived together, and never tired of each other until he died, when the life went also out of the library, his wife, and she fell all to separate pieces, every piece a precious seedling of future life should it be planted in the right place. Is there not here

the material for an allegory? A library, you will perceive, is essentially feminine: it is receptive; it is responsive; it is productive. You may lavish upon it—say, upon her—as much love as you have in your nature, and she will reward you with fair offspring, sweet and tender babes—ideas, thoughts, memories, and hopes. Who would not love the mother of such children? Who would not be their father?

The Furniture Library never gets a new book added to it at all. But even this poor dead and dispirited thing is better than the Flimsy Library, common among persons who have had no scholar in their family, or else no family among their scholars. The volumes of the Flimsy Library consist wholly of the books collected during youthful and prænuptial days. They are beautifully bound in crimson cloth and gold, with a leaning towards too much ornament. They are the books which used to be presented to young ladies—ten, twenty, thirty, forty years ago, according to the age of the house. The titles vary, but the taste remains much the same: they are books on domestic affections, the immortal works of Mesdames Ellis, Hemans, Sigourney, Sewell, and Yonge; Keble in many

bindings; the "Gentle Life"; Longfellow, Scott, Tupper, Wordsworth, and so forth. Perhaps there is a row of the "Waverley Novels," and there are one or two "Handbooks." The Flimsy Library can go no farther.

A third class of library, and a very common one, may be called the Railway Library. It consists of two-shilling novels—nothing else—and each one represents a railway journey. They stand in rows with their paper bindings in red, black, and yellow; they are treasured by their owners as if they were Elzevirs at the least; there may be also among them, perhaps, a Bret Harte or a Mark Twain—humourists who have caught the popular taste. Burnand, Lowell, Leland, Gilbert, who somehow seem to have missed the uncritical ear, will not generally be seen on the shelves of the Railway Library. These three classes of library represent the broad divisions. There are, however, others—subdivisions—which should not be forgotten.

Thus, there is the Fashionable Library, in which every volume marks a passing phase of literary fashion in *genre*, printing, or binding, from the Minerva school down to a Ballade or a Villanelle; there is the Casual Library, in

All history unrolls before me . . . kingly pomp, what processions file past.

which the books seem to have been bought by the yard just to fill up the shelves; the Technical Library, in which the seeker after literature finds the Dead Sea apples of scientific and professional works—fancy Charles Lamb shut up for an afternoon with a mathematical library! —the Goody-Goody Library, where the works are certainly intended to disgust the young with virtue and religion; the Milk-and-Water Library, most of the books in which are at least thirty years of age, and were written by ladies who wore a velvet band about their brows, were great on morals, and knew how to value their Christian privileges; the Baby Library, consisting of new books quite recently written and illustrated by wicked people with the object of making sweet little children self-conscious, morbid, and conceited; the Theological Library, devoted entirely to controversial works now happily forgotten; the Fast Library, in which the works of "Ouida" are found complete, and a great many French novels in yellow present the appearance of having been welcomed more affectionately than tenderly; and, finally, the Good Library, in which one may sit among the best, the wisest, the most delightful, the wittiest, the tend-

crest men who have lived and written for our solace and instruction—happy heaven be their lot! And oh, dear me, how rare it is to find such a library!

The most remarkable feature of all these collections, except the last, is that you never find among them any new books at all except a few two-shilling novels. Yet, if you talk with the people who own them, you find that, thanks to a circulating library, they have some kind of acquaintance, greater or less, with current literature. They are not without interest in new books and living writers. Such a book as Carlyle's "Reminiscences" stirs their curiosity: they like to know a man of literary distinction, they have some rudiments of literary culture—they do read books. For a truly remarkable thing has happened in this country, where more books are written, more published, and more read than in any other two countries put together: a large section of reading people *have left off buying books*; they do not think of buying them: they have lost the habit of buying them; it does not occur to them that they may be considered as things which may be bought. Everything else in the world that is delightful and precious and ardent-

ly to be desired, they know can only be had for money. Of such things they will, and do, buy as much as they can afford. But they do not desire to possess books, or to buy them. They read them and toss them away.

If we think of it, this is a very strange result of a love of reading. Those for whom books are written do not buy them. Were there not a very large number of people who read and ask for new books, and therefore make Smith and Mudie take a great many copies, the trades of author, publisher, printer, paper-maker, and binder would quickly fall into contempt by reason of poverty. Rags, you see, cannot long continue respectable. One would like to know, if the libraries could be induced to publish statistics, how many subscribers they have upon their books out of all our thirty millions. That question may be taken to mean, how many of our population habitually read books? Next to this, one would like to know what books are in most demand; but it is an inquiry which for the sake of certain reputations must be conducted with some delicacy. Further, one would like to ask what, if any, novels of the last season are asked for? whether there is any demand for modern

poets and, if so, for whom? and at what social level people cease to belong to a library?—where, in fact, Mr Mudie draws his line? Costers, for instance, certainly do not read new books; do fruiterers, bakers, butchers? Do the ordinary tradesmen? Where, in fact, begins that immense mass of people who never read books at all, have no bookshelves, and reverence none of the great names of poets and authors?

It is really an APPALLING thing to think of the people who have no books. Can we picture to ourselves a home without these gentle friends? Can we imagine a life dead to all the gracious influences of sweet thoughts sweetly spoken, of tender suggestions tenderly whispered, of holy dreams, glowing play of fancy, unexpected reminding of subtle analogies and unsuspected harmonies, and those swift thoughts which pierce the heart like an arrow and fill us with a new sense of what we are and what we may be? Yet there are thousands and tens of thousands of homes where these influences never reach, where the whole of the world is hard, cruel fact unredeemed by hope or illusion, with the beauty of the world shut out and the grace of life destroyed. It is only by books that most men and

women can lift themselves above the sordidness of life. No books! Yet for the greater part of humanity that is the common lot. We may, in fact, divide our fellow-creatures into two branches—those who read books and those who do not. Digger Indians, Somaulis, Veddahs, Andaman Islanders, Lancashire wife-kickers, Irish landlord shooters, belong to those who do not. How few alas be those who do!

I lately saw in some paper, and was not surprised to see it, that the result of a complete Board-school course is generally that the boys and girls who have been triumphantly examined in special subjects for the sake of the Grant go away without the least desire ever to read anything else for the rest of their lives. This seems a disappointing outcome of any system of education. With infinite pains and at great expense we put into a boy's hands the key to all the knowledge whereunto man hath attained, to all the knowledge whereunto he may hereafter attain, and to most of the delight of life—and he does not care to exercise that power! Perhaps it is not altogether the fault of the system. In every school, one knows there is the boy who loves reading and the boy who does not. He is found

as a matter of course in the Board school as much as at Rugby. And many most respectable men, it must be confessed, have got on in the world without any love for books, with no desire at all for knowledge and with absolutely no feeling for the beauty and force of language. One such I knew in days bygone, an excellent person who had read but one book in all his life: it was Macaulay's "Essays." Nor did he ever desire to read another book: that was enough for him. On a certain evening I persuaded him to come with me to a theatre, for the first time in his life. He sat out the performance with great politeness and patience: it did not touch him in the least, though the piece was very funny and very well acted. When we came away he said to me, "Yes; it was a pleasing exhibition, but I would rather have spent my evening over Macaulay's 'Essays.'" Another man I once knew who made one book last through a considerable part of his life, but this was perhaps mere pretence, with craft and subtlety. Thus, for many years, if he was asked for an opinion, he invariably replied, "I have not yet had time to investigate the question. I am at present engaged upon Humboldt's 'Cosmos.'" The taste for reading in fact is born

with one. We may even conceive of a man born with that taste, yet never taught to read. He would grow up melancholy, moody, ever conscious that something was absent which would have made an incomplete life harmonious and delightful. Fancy the prehistoric man born with such a taste, uncomfortable because something, he knew not what, was wanting; restless, dissatisfied, yearning after some unknown delight, sorrowful, yet unable to explain his sorrow: taking no solid pleasure like his fellows in sucking his marrowbones, crouching among the bones in the innermost recesses of the cave, regardless of his kitchen midden. Happy, indeed, for that small section of previously unsatisfied mankind, when someone, after intolerable searchings of spirit, and with infinite travail, produced the first rude semblance of hieroglyph, Phœnician, Cuneiform, or Hittite. As for the rest of mankind, they might have gone on to this day, as indeed they practically do, without an alphabet, and would never have missed it. So that, after all, we need not feel too much indignation over the failure of the School Board.

A stranger thing, however, is, not that some men do not care about reading, but that those

who do, those who read much, who read daily, as the principal part of the day's relaxation, have left off desiring to buy books!

Can it be that even bookish boys are no longer taught to value books? That seems impossible, to begin with. A bookish boy is at first a curious and inquiring boy, who, at every step of his progress, imbibes unconsciously the love of books. He first wants to know; he reads everything that tells him anything about the world and the nations of the world; the story of the stars and the wonders of the earth; the history of mankind and the growth of arts. As he reads he begins to understand the beauty of arrangement, and so, little by little, there grows up within him a new sense, namely, the sense of form, the fine feeling for a phrase, the music of words put together by the hand of a master. When once a man has understood so much, he is separated from his fellows as much as if hands had been laid upon him, as in a sense they have been. Language has become to him what it can never be to them—a wondrous organ upon which divine melodies may be played; perhaps he is content to listen; perhaps he may, with trembling fingers, assay to touch the charmed instrument. I

cannot think that such a boy would ever cease to love books.

It is the development of this other sense, the sense of style, which causes this love. It is its absence which makes people indifferent to the books themselves as well as to what they read. How can people be expected to buy that which they cannot appreciate? How many are there among educated people who are capable of appreciation?

For instance, millions of people read, quite complacently, works whose literary merits are so small that they are intolerable to any who have the least sense of style. Yet this defect does not affect their popularity. Some men write with the end of a broomstick, some with a gold pen, some with an etcher's needle. The broomstick man is, perhaps, the most popular. Then people read books just as they look at a picture, or go to the play, "for the story." That is all they care about. The story read, they dismiss it from their thoughts. There was once a French dramatist, Alexander Hardy by name, who understood this so well that when he constructed a new play he contented himself with devising story, situation, and tableaux, leaving his actors to supply

the words. Who cared about the words? Of course the heroines screamed, and the villain swore, and the funny man dropped the plates—all in the right place. What more did the people want? And what more, indeed, do they want now?

Overmuch reading and promiscuous reading are great hindrances to the formation of a critical habit. The critic does not gulp: he tastes; he discriminates between Hamburg sherry and the true wine of Xeres by the aid of a wine-glass, not a tumbler. But the omnivorous reader is like unto one who takes his draught from a quart pot. Fancy a city dinner at which peasoup, tripe and onions, fried fish, roast pork and stuffing, raw onions, and such viands were served up side by side with the most delicate preparations, the sole *a la maître d'hotel*, the *cotelette*, the *ris de veau*, the *mayonnaise*: where thick sugared stout was handed round with Johannisberg, Chateau Yquem, and Piper *très sec*; fancy the guests indiscriminately taking one after the other without discernment, enjoying one quite as much as the other, with a leaning in the direction of roast pork and stout:—that, if you please, is a fair example of the intellectual meal taken continually by the all-devouring reader. He reads

everything: he reads whatever is set before him: he reads without consideration: he reads without criticism: all styles are alike to him: he is never greatly delighted, and seldom offended.

Another, and perhaps a more powerful cause why books are not valued as possessions, is, without doubt, the great facility with which they may be borrowed. This brings upon them the kind of contempt which always attaches to a thing which is cheap. Such a thing, to begin with, must be bad: who can expect good wine, good cigars, good gloves, at a low price? What sort of books, one feels, are those which can be shovelled into the circulating libraries as fast as they are asked for? The ease with which a thirsty reader is supplied destroys the value of a book. Young people, especially, no longer feel the old sweet delight of buying a book and possessing it. Therefore the preciousness of books is going out. I believe they will before long substitute for prize books, prize bats, prize footballs, prize rifles. Yet, asks Ruskin, "is not a book of mine worth at least a physician's fee?"

We do not sufficiently realise what is meant by this cheapness of literature. It means that the most delightful amusement, the chief recre-

ation of the civilised world—the pursuit which raises the mind above the sordid conditions of life, gives ideas, unfolds possibilities, inspires noble thoughts, or presents pleasing images—is a thing which may be procured in sufficient quantity for a whole household for three, four, or five guineas a year—judiciously managed, and by arrangement with other families, for three guineas a year. Compare this with other amusements. One evening at the Lyceum with the girls costs as much; a dinner at the club to one or two friends costs as much; sittings at church cost very little more. Three guineas will take one man to the seaside from Saturday to Monday; it will buy just one dozen of champagne; it will pay the butcher's bill for a fortnight; it will pay for one new coat or one new dress. From whatever point of view one looks at three guineas it is a trifling and evanescent sum—it is gone as soon as looked at: it is quickly eaten up, and the memory of the banquet almost as quickly departs with it; it is a day's pleasure, an evening's amusement; yet, administered in the way of a subscription, it represents nothing less than the recreation of a whole family for a twelve-month. What an investment!

What an investment, indeed! It causes books to rain upon the house like the manna of the desert; so that—alas!—it seems to the younger members as if they came spontaneously, and it prevents boys of the bookish kind from looking upon individual books with that passionate love which comes partly from the delight of reading and partly from the difficulties of acquisition. Who has not read with admiration and joy, how the lover of books has hovered day after day over a stall where lay a treasure which he cannot buy until he has denied himself a few more dinners? Who has not sympathised with him when he marches home in triumph, bearing the book with him; though he is fain to tighten his waistband for hunger? All that is over, because any book may be had by any boy for the asking.

To sum up. Let us try at least to be just, if not generous. Few among us can buy all the books which we like to read, but let us recognise literature as so great an essential, such an absolute necessary for our comfort and happiness, that since it *must* be had it ought to be paid for, just as much as protection from rogues, as much as dress and food. Then come the questions—how much should we pay for it? and how? As

or the latter, it is easy to answer: we *must buy the books which please us most.* As for the former, if the principle be conceded that it is the plain and clear duty of every one to buy such books as he can afford out of those which have given him pleasure, then the proportion to his expenditure must be settled by himself. But let us be practical: let us make a suggestion: let us estimate literature as a rateable thing. For my own part, I should be disposed to measure the amount by rental, which seems to rule everything. A lover of books would spontaneously tax himself a good fifteen shillings in the pound. The general reader will perhaps be startled at first at being called upon for five shillings. Yet I would not let him off for one farthing less. Five shillings in the pound is the lowest rate that can be levied for literature. In better times, when the public taste is cultivated, when a good book will not only be read but bought, when a good writer will be as greatly rewarded as a successful barrister, a physician of repute, or a bishop, the rate will, of course, be higher. But for the moment I think that authors will be satisfied with a simple five shillings.

OF STUDIES BY FRANCIS BACON

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STUDIES SERVE FOR DELIGHT, FOR ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight, is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business. For expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time on studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules is the humour of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience; for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need proyning by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use: but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to

be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sorts of books; else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise; facts witty; the mathematics subtile; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend. *Abeunt studia in mores.* Nay, there is no stond or impediment in the wit, but may be wrought out by fit studies; like as diseases of the body may have appropriate exercises. Bowling is good for the stone and reins; shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle calking for the stomach; riding for the head; and the like. So, if a man's wit be wan-

dering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again. If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the schoolmen, for they are *cymini sectores*. If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call up one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyer's cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.

ON THE PLEASURE OF READING BY LORD AVEBURY

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OF ALL THE PRIVILEGES WE ENJOY in this nineteenth century there is none, perhaps, for which we ought to be more thankful than for the easier access to books. In the words of an old English song—

"Oh for a booke and a shadie nooke,
Eyther in-a-doore or out;
With the grene leaves whispering overhede,
Or the streete cryes all about.
Where I maie reade all at my ease,
Both of the newe and olde;
For a jollie goode booke whereon to looke,
Is better to me than golde."

The debt we owe to books is well expressed by R. de Bury, Bishop of Durham, author of "Philobiblon," published in 1473, and the earliest English treatise on the delights of literature:—"These are the masters who instruct us without rods and ferules, without hard words and anger, without clothes or money. If you approach them, they are not asleep; if investigating you interrogate them, they conceal nothing; if you mistake them, they never grumble; if you are ignorant, they cannot laugh at you."

This feeling that books are real friends is

constantly present to all who love reading.

"I have friends," said Petrarch, "whose society is extremely agreeable to me; they are of all ages, and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honours for their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them, for they are always at my service, and I admit them to my company, and dismiss them from it, whenever I please. They are never troublesome, but immediately answer every question I ask them. Some relate to me the events of past ages, while others reveal to me the secrets of Nature. Some teach me how to live, and others how to die. Some, by their vivacity, drive away my cares and exhilarate my spirits; while others give fortitude to my mind, and teach me the important lesson how to restrain my desires, and to depend wholly on myself. They open to me, in short, the various avenues of all the arts and sciences, and upon their information I may safely rely in all emergencies. In return for all their services, they only ask me to accommodate them with a convenient chamber in some corner of my humble habitation, where they repose in peace; for

these friends are more delighted by the tranquillity of retirement than with the tumults of society."

"He that loveth a book," says Isaac Barrow, "will never want a faithful friend, a wholesome counsellor, a cheerful companion, an effectual comforter. By study, by reading, by thinking, one may innocently divert and pleasantly entertain himself, as in all weathers, so in all fortunes."

Southey took rather a more melancholy view—

"My days among the dead are pass'd,
Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old;
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day."

Imagine in the words of Aikin—

"That we had it in our power to call up the shades of the greatest and wisest men that ever existed, and oblige them to converse with us on the most interesting topics—what an inestimable privilege should we think it!—how superior to all common enjoyments! But in a well-furnished library we, in fact, possess this power.

We can question Xenophon and Cæsar on their campaigns, make Demosthenes and Cicero plead before us, join in the audiences of Socrates and Plato, and receive demonstrations from Euclid and Newton. In books we have the choicest thoughts of the ablest men in their best dress."

"Books," says Jeremy Collier, "are a guide in youth and an entertainment for age. They support us under solitude, and keep us from being a burthen to ourselves. They help us to forget the crossness of men and things; compose our cares and our passions; and lay our disappointments asleep. When we are weary of the living, we may repair to the dead, who have nothing of peevishness, pride, or design, in their conversation."

Cicero described a room without books as a body without a soul. But it is by no means necessary to be a philosopher to love reading.

Sir John Herschel tells an amusing anecdote illustrating the pleasure derived from a book, not assuredly of the first order. In a certain village the blacksmith had got hold of Richardson's novel, "Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded," and used to sit on his anvil in the long summer

evenings and read it aloud to a large and attentive audience. It is by no means a short book, but they fairly listened to it all. "At length, when the happy turn of fortune arrived, which brings the hero and heroine together, and sets them living long and happily according to the most approved rules, the congregation were so delighted as to raise a great shout, and procuring the church keys, actually set the parish bells ringing."

"The lover of reading," says Leigh Hunt, "will derive agreeable terror from 'Sir Bertram' and the 'Haunted Chamber'; will assent with delighted reason to every sentence in 'Mrs Barbauld's Essay;' will feel himself wandering into solitudes with 'Gray'; shake honest hands with 'Sir Roger de Coverley'; be ready to embrace 'Parson Adams,' and to chuck 'Pounce' out of the window instead of the hat; will travel with 'Marco Polo' and 'Mungo Park'; stay at home with 'Thomson'; retire with 'Cowley'; be industrious with 'Hutton'; sympathising with 'Gay and Mrs Inchbald'; laughing with (and at) 'Buncle'; melancholy, forlorn, and self-restored with the ship-wrecked mariner of 'De Foe.'"

The delights of reading have been appreciated in many quarters where we might least expect it. Among the hardy Norsemen, Runes were supposed to be endowed with miraculous power. There is an Arabic proverb, that "a wise man's day is worth a fool's life," and though it rather perhaps reflects the spirit of the Califs than of the Sultans, that "the ink of science is more precious than the blood of martyrs."

Confucius is said to have described himself as a man who "in his eager pursuit of knowledge forgot his food, who in the joy of its attainment forgot his sorrows, and did not even perceive that old age was coming on."

Yet, if this could be said of the Chinese and the Arabs, what language can be strong enough to express the gratitude we ought to feel for the advantages we enjoy. We do not appreciate, I think, our good fortune in belonging to the nineteenth century. A hundred years ago many of the most delightful books were still uncreated. How much more interesting science has become especially, if I were to mention only one name, through the genius of Darwin. Renan has characterised this as a most amusing cent-

ury; I should rather have described it as most interesting: presenting us with an endless vista of absorbing problems, with infinite opportunities, with more than the excitements, and less of the dangers, which surrounded our less fortunate ancestors.

Reading, indeed, is by no means necessarily study. Far from it. "I put," says Mr Frederick Harrison in his excellent article on the "Choice of Books" (*Fortnightly Review*, 1879)—"I put the poetic and emotional side of literature as the most needed for daily use."

In the prologue to the "Legend of Goode Women," Chaucer says—

"And as for me, though that I konne but lyte,
On bokes for to rede I me delyte,
And to him give I feyth and ful credence,
And in myn herte have him in reverence,
So hertely, that ther is game noon
That fro my bokes maketh me to goon,
But yt be seldome on the holy day,
Save, certynly, when that the
monthe of May
Is comen, and that I here the foules synge,
And that the floures gynnen for to sprynge,
Farwel my boke, and my devocion."

But I doubt whether, if he had enjoyed our advantages, he could have been so certain of tearing himself away even in the month of May.

Macaulay, who had all that wealth and fame, rank and talents could give, yet, we are told, derived his greatest happiness from books. Mr Trevelyan, in his charming biography, says that—

"Of the feelings which Macaulay entertained towards the great minds of bygone ages it is not for any one except himself to speak. He has told us how his debt to them was incalculable; how they guided him to truth; how they filled his mind with noble and graceful images; how they stood by him in all vicissitudes—comforters in sorrow, nurses in sickness, companions in solitude, the old friends who are never seen with new faces; who are the same in wealth and in poverty, in glory, and in obscurity. Great as were the honours and possessions which Macaulay acquired by his pen, all who knew him were well aware that the titles and rewards which he gained by his own works, were as nothing in the balance as compared with the pleasure he derived from the works of others."

There was no society in London so agree-

able that Macaulay would have preferred it at breakfast or at dinner to the company of Sterne, or Fielding, Horace Walpole or Boswell.

The love of reading which Gibbon declared he would not exchange for all the treasures of India was, in fact, with Macaulay "a main element of happiness in one of the happiest lives that it has ever fallen to the lot of the biographer to record."

Moreover, books are now so cheap as to be within the reach of almost every one. This was not always so. It is quite a recent blessing.

Mr Ireland, to whose charming little "Book Lover's Enchiridion," in common with every lover of reading, I am greatly indebted, tells us that when a boy he was so delighted with White's "Natural History of Selborne," that in order to possess a copy of his own he actually copied out the whole work.

Mary Lamb gives a pathetic description of a studious boy lingering at a book-stall:—

"I saw a boy with eager eye
Open a book upon a stall,
And read, as he'd devour it all;
Which, when the stall man did espy.
Soon to the boy I heard him call,

'You, sir, you never buy a book,
Therefore in one you shall not look.'
The boy passed slowly on, and with a sigh
He wished he never had been taught to read,
Then of the old churl's books he should
have no need."

Such snatches of literature have, indeed, a special and peculiar charm. This is, I believe, partly due to the very fact of their being brief. Many readers, I think, miss much of the pleasure of reading, by forcing themselves to dwell too long continuously on one subject. In a long railway journey, for instance, many persons take only a single book. The consequence is that, unless it is a story, after half an hour or an hour they are quite tired of it. Whereas, if they had two, or still better, three, on different subjects, and one of them being of an amusing character, they would probably find that by changing as soon as they felt at all weary, they would come back again and again to each with renewed zest, and hour after hour would pass pleasantly away. Every one, of course, must judge for himself, but such at least is my experience.

I quite agree, therefore, with Lord Iddesleigh as to the charm of desultory reading, but

the wider the field the more important that we should benefit by the very best books in each class. Not that we need confine ourselves to them, but that we should commence with them, and they will certainly lead us on to others. There are, of course, some books which we must read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. But these are exceptions. As regards by far the larger number, it is probably better to read them quickly, dwelling only on the best and most important passages. In this way, no doubt, we shall lose much, but we gain more by ranging over a wider field.

We may, in fact, I think, apply to reading Lord Brougham's wise dictum as regards education, and say that it is well to read everything of something, and something of everything. In this way only we can ascertain the bent of our own tastes, for it is a general, though not of course an invariable, rule, that we profit little by books which we do not enjoy.

Our difficulty now is what to select. We must be careful what we read, and not, like the sailors of Ulysses, take bags of wind for sacks of treasure—not only lest we should even now

fall into the error of the Greeks, and suppose that language and definitions can be instruments of investigation as well as of thought, but lest, as too often happens, we should waste time over trash. There are many books to which one may apply, in the sarcastic sense, the ambiguous remark said to have been made to an unfortunate author, "I will lose no time in reading your book."

It is wonderful, indeed, how much innocent happiness we thoughtlessly throw away. An Eastern proverb says that calamities sent by heaven may be avoided, but from those we bring on ourselves there is no escape. Time is often said to be money, but it is more, for it is life itself. Yet how many there are who would cling desperately to life, and yet think nothing of wasting time!

"For who knows most, him loss of time most grieves."

"I remember," says Hilliard, "a satirical poem, in which the devil is represented as fishing for men, and adapting his bait to the tastes and temperaments of his prey; but the idlers were the easiest victims, for they swallowed even the naked hook."

"Ask of the wise," says Schiller, in Lord Sherbrooke's translation,

"the moments we forego
Eternity itself cannot retrieve."

Chesterfield's "Letters to his Son," with a great deal that is worldly and cynical, contain certainly much good advice. "Every moment," for instance, he says, "which you now lose is so much character and advantage lost; as, on the other hand, every moment you now employ usefully, is so much time wisely laid out at prodigious interest." "Do what you will," he elsewhere observes, "only do something." "Know the true value of time; snatch, seize, and enjoy every moment of it."

Is not happiness indeed a duty, as well as self-denial? It has been well said that some of our teachers err, perhaps, in that "they dwell on the duty of self-denial, but exhibit not the duty of delight." We must, however, be ungrateful indeed if we cannot appreciate the wonderful and beautiful world in which we live. Moreover, how can we better make others happy than by being cheerful and happy ourselves.

Few, indeed, attain the philosophy of Hegel, who is said to have calmly finished his

"Phænomenologie des Geistes" at Jena, on October 14, 1806, not knowing anything whatever of the battle that was raging round him. Most men, however, may at will make of this world either a palace or a prison, and there are few more effective and more generally available sources of happiness than the wise use of books.

Many, I believe, are deterred from attempting what are called stiff books for fear that they should not understand them; but, as Hobbes said, there are few who need complain of the narrowness of their minds, if only they would do their best with them.

In reading, however, it is most important to select subjects in which one is interested. I remember years ago consulting Mr Darwin as to the selection of a course of study. He asked me what interested me most, and advised me to choose that subject. This indeed applies to the work of life generally.

I am sometimes disposed to think that the great readers of the next generation will be, not our lawyers and doctors, shopkeepers and manufacturers, but the labourer and mechanic. Does not this seem natural? The former work mainly with their head; when their daily duties

are over the brain is often exhausted, and of their leisure time much must be devoted to air and exercise. The labourer or mechanic, on the contrary, besides working often for much shorter hours, have in their work-time taken sufficient bodily exercise, and could therefore give any leisure they might have to reading and study. They have not done so as yet, it is true; but this has been for obvious reasons. Now, however, in the first place, they receive an excellent education in elementary schools, and have more easy access to the best books.

Ruskin has observed he does not wonder at what men suffer, but he often wonders at what they lose. We suffer much, no doubt, from the faults of others, but we lose much more by our own.

It is one thing, however, to own a library; it is another to use it wisely. Everyone of us may say with Proctor—

"All round the room my silent servants wait—
My friends in every season, bright and dim,
Angels and seraphim
Come down and murmur to me, sweet and low,
And spirits of the skies all come and go
Early and late."

Yet too often they wait in vain. I have often been astonished how little care people devote to the selection of what they read. Books we know are almost innumerable; our hours for reading are, alas! very few. And yet many people read almost by hazard. They will take any book they chance to find in a room at a friend's house; they will buy a novel at a railway-stall if it has an attractive title; indeed, I believe in some cases even the binding affects the choice. The selection is, no doubt, far from easy. I have often wished some one would recommend a list of a hundred good books. If we had such lists drawn up by a few good guides they would be most useful. I have, indeed, sometimes heard it said that in reading every one must choose for himself, but this reminds me of the recommendation not to go into the water till you can swim.

DETACHED THOUGHTS ON BOOKS AND READING BY CHARLES LAMB

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To mind the inside of a book is to entertain one's self with the forced product of another man's brain. Now I think a man of quality and breeding may be much amused with the natural sprouts of his own.—Lord Foppington in "The Relapse."

AN INGENIOUS ACQUAINTANCE OF my own was so much struck with this bright sally of his lordship, that he has left off reading altogether, to the great improvement of his originality. At the hazard of losing some credit on this head, I must confess that I dedicate no inconsiderable portion of my time to other people's thoughts. I dream away my life in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in other mens' minds. When I am not walking, I am reading. I cannot sit and think. Books think for me.

I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild too low. I can read anything which I call a book. There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such.

In this catalogue of *books which are no books —biblia a-biblia*—I reckon Court Calendars, Directories, Pocket Books (the literary except-

ed), Draught Boards, bound and lettered at the back, Scientific Treatises, Almanacks, Statutes at large; the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and generally, all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be without": the Histories of Flavius Josephus (that learned Jew), and Paley's Moral Philosophy. With these exceptions, I can read almost anything. I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so unexcluding.

I confess that it moves my spleen to see these *things in books' clothing* perched upon shelves, like false saints, usurpers of true shrines, intruders into the sanctuary, thrusting out the legitimate occupants. To reach down a well-bound semblance of a volume, and hope it some kind-hearted play-book, then, opening what "seem its leaves," to come bolt upon a withering Population Essay. To expect a Steele or a Farquhar, and find—Adam Smith. To view a well-arranged assortment of blockheaded Encyclopædias (Anglicanas or Metropolitanas) set out in an array of Russia, or Morocco, when a tythe of that good leather would comfortably re-clothe my shivering folios; would renovate Paracelsus himself, and enable old Raymund

Lully (I have them both, reader) to look like himself again in the world. I never see these imposters, but I long to strip them, to warm my ragged veterans in their spoils.

To be strong-backed and neat-bound is the desideratum of a volume. Magnificence comes after. This, when it can be afforded, is not to be lavished upon all kinds of books indiscriminately. I would not dress a set of Magazines, for instance, in full suit. The dishabille or half-binding (with Russia backs ever) is *our* costume. A Shakespeare or a Milton (unless the first editions), it were mere foppery to trick out in gay apparel. The possession of them confers no distinction. The exterior of them (the things themselves being so common), strange to say, raises no sweet emotions, no tickling sense of property in the owner. Thomson's Seasons, again, looks best (I maintain it) a little torn and dog's-eared. How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves, and worn-out appearance, nay, the very odour (beyond Russia) if we would not forget kind feelings in fastidiousness, of an old "Circulating Library" Tom Jones, or Vicar of Wakefield! How they speak of the thousand thumbs that have turn-

ed over their pages with delight!—of the lone sempstress, whom they may have cheered (milliner or hard-working mantua-maker) after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents! Who would have them a whit less soiled? What better condition could we desire to see them in?

In some respects the better a book is, the less it demands from binding. Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and all that class of perpetually self-reproductive volumes—Great Nature's Stereotypes—we see them individually perish with less regret, because we know the copies of them to be "eterne." But where a book is at once both good and rare—where the individual is almost the species, and when *that* perishes,

"We know not where is that Promethean torch
Than can its light relumine,"—

such a book, for instance, as the Life of the Duke of Newcastle, by his Duchess—no casket is rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable, to honour and keep safe such a jewel.

Not only rare volumes of this description,

which seem hopeless ever to be reprinted; but old editions of writers, such as Sir Philip Sydney, Bishop Taylor, Milton in his prose works, Fuller—of whom we *have* reprints; yet the books themselves, though they go about, and are talked of here and there, we know have not endenizened themselves (nor possibly ever will) in the national heart, so as to become stock books—it is good to possess these in durable and costly covers.—I do not care for a First Folio of Shakespeare. You cannot make a *pet* book of an author whom everybody reads. I rather prefer the common editions of Rowe and Tonson, without notes, and with *plates*, which, being so execrably bad, serve as maps or modest remembrancers, to the text; and, without pretending to any supposeable emulation with it, are so much better than the Shakespeare gallery *engravings*, which *did*. I have a community of feeling with my countrymen about his Plays, and I like those editions of him best which have been oftenest tumbled about and handled. On the contrary, I cannot read Beaumont and Fletcher but in Folio. The Octavo editions are painful to look at. I have no sympathy with them nor with Mr Gifford's Ben Jonson. If they were as much

read as the current editions of the other poet, I should prefer them in that shape to the older one. I do not know a more heartless sight than the reprint of the Anatomy of Melancholy. What need was there of unearthing the bones of that fantastic old great man, to expose them in a winding-sheet of the latest edition to modern censure? what hapless stationer could dream of Burton ever becoming popular? The wretched Malone could not do worse, when he bribed the sexton of Stratford church to let him whitewash the painted effigy of old Shakespeare, which stood there, in rude but lively fashion depicted, to the very colour of the cheek, the eye, the eyebrow, hair, the very dress he used to wear —the only authentic testimony we had, however imperfect, of these curious parts and parcels of him. They covered him over with a coat of white paint. By—, if I had been a justice of peace for Warwickshire, I would have clappt both commentator and sexton fast in the stocks, for a pair of meddling sacrilegious varlets.

I think I see them at their work—these sapient trouble-tombs.

Shall I be thought fantastical if I confess that the names of some of our poets sound sweeter,

and have a finer relish to the ear—to mine, at least—than that of Milton or of Shakespeare? It may be that the latter are more staled and rung upon in common discourse. The sweetest names, and which carry a perfume in the mention, are, Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley.

Much depends upon *when* and *where* you read a book. In the five or six impatient minutes, before the dinner is quite ready, who would think of taking up the Fairy Queen for a stopgap, or a volume of Bishop Andrewes' sermons? Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played, before you enter upon him. But he brings his music—to which, who listens, had need bring docile thoughts and purged ears.

Winter evenings—the world shut out—with less of ceremony the gentle Shakespeare enters. At such a season the Tempest—or his own Winter's Tale.

These two poets you cannot avoid reading aloud—to yourself, or (as it chances) to some single person listening. More than one—and it degenerates into an audience.

Books of quick interest, that hurry on for incidents, are for the eye to glide over only. It will

not do to read them out. I could never listen to even the better kind of modern novels without extreme irksomeness.

A newspaper, read out, is intolerable. In some of the Bank offices it is the custom (to save so much individual time) for one of the clerks—who is the best scholar—to commence upon the *Times* or the *Chronicle* and recite its entire contents aloud, *pro bono publico*. With every advantage of lungs and elocution, the effect is singularly vapid. In barbers' shops and public-houses a fellow will get up and spell out a paragraph, which he communicates as some discovery. Another follows with his selection. So the entire journal transpires at length by piecemeal. Seldom-readers are slow readers, and, without this expedient, no one in the company would probably ever travel through the contents of a whole paper.

Newspapers always excite curiosity. No one ever lays one down without a feeling of disappointment.

What an eternal time that gentleman in black, at Nando's, keeps the paper! I am sick of hearing the waiter bawling out incessantly, "the *Chronicle* is in hand, Sir."

As in these little Diurnals I generally skip the Foreign News—the Debates and the Politics —I find the *Morning Herald* by far the most entertaining of them. It is an agreeable miscellany, rather than a newspaper.

Coming into an inn at night—having ordered your supper—what can be more delightful than to find lying in the window-seat, left there time out of mind by the carelessness of some former guest—two or three numbers of the old *Town and Country Magazine*, with its amusing *tête-à-tête* pictures—"The Royal Lover and Lady G——;" "the Melting Platonic and the old Beau,"—and such like antiquated scandal? Would you exchange it—at that time, and in that place—for a better book?

Poor Tobin, who latterly fell blind, did not regret it so much for the weightier kinds of reading—the Paradise Lost or Comus, he could have *read* to him—but he missed the pleasure of skimming over with his own eye—a magazine, or a light pamphlet.

I should not care to be caught in the serious avenues of some cathedral alone, and reading —*Candide!*

I do not remember a more whimsical surprise

than having been once detected—by a familiar damsel—reclined at my ease upon the grass, on Primrose Hill (her Cythera) reading—*Pamela*. There was nothing in the book to make a man seriously ashamed at the exposure; but, as she seated herself down by me, and seemed determined to read in company, I could have wished it had been—any other book.—We read on very sociably for a few pages; and, not finding the author much to her taste, she got up, and—went away. Gentle casuist, I leave it to thee to conjecture, whether the blush (for there was one between us) was the property of the nymph or the swain in this dilemma. From me you shall never get the secret.

I am not much a friend to out-of-doors reading. I cannot settle my spirits to it. I knew a Unitarian minister, who was generally to be seen upon Snow Hill (as yet Skinner's Street *was not*) between the hours of ten and eleven in the morning, studying a volume of Lardner, I own this to have been a strain of abstraction beyond my reach. I used to admire how he sidled along, keeping clear of secular contacts. An illiterate encounter with a porter's knot, or a bread-basket, would have quickly put to flight

all the theology I am master of, and have left me worse than indifferent to the five points.

I was once amused—there is a pleasure in *affecting* affectation—at the indignation of a crowd that was justling in with me at the pit door of Covent Garden Theatre, to have a sight of Master Bettey—then at once in his dawn and his meridian—in *Hamlet.* I had been invited quite unexpectedly to join a party, whom I met near the door of the playhouse, and I happened to have in my hand a large octavo of Johnson and Stevens's Shakespeare, which, the time not admitting of my carrying it home, of course went with me to the theatre. Just in the very heat and pressure of the doors opening—the rush, as they term it—I deliberately held the volume over my head, open at the scene in which the young Roscious had been most cried up, and quietly read by the lamp-light. The clamour became universal. "The affectation of the fellow," cried one. "Look at that gentleman READING, papa," squeaked a young lady, who in her admiration of the novelty almost forgot her fears. I read on. "He ought to have his book knocked out of his hand," exclaimed a pursy cit., whose arms were too fast pinioned to his side to suffer

him to execute his kind intention. Still I read on —and, till the time came to pay my money, kept as unmoved, as Saint Antony at his Holy Offices, with the satyrs, apes, and hobgoblins, mopping and making mouths at him, in the picture, while the good man sits as undisturbed at the sight, as if he were sole tenant of the desert.— The individual rabble (I recognised more than one of their ugly faces) had damned a slight piece of mine but a few nights before, and I was determined the culprits should not a second time put me out of countenance.

There is a class of street-readers, whom I can never contemplate without affection—the poor gentry, who, not having wherewithal to buy or hire a book, filch a little learning at the open stalls—the owner, with his hard eye, casting envious looks at them all the while, and thinking when they will have done. Venturing tenderly, page after page, expecting every moment when he shall interpose his interdict, and yet unable to deny themselves the gratification, they "snatch a fearful joy." Martin B——, in this way, by daily fragments, got through two volumes of Clarissa, when the stall-keeper damped his laudable ambition, by asking him (it was in

his younger days) whether he meant to purchase the work. M. declares, that under no circumstance in his life did he ever peruse a book with half the satisfaction which he took in those uneasy snatches. A quaint poetess of our day has moralised upon this subject in two very touching but homely stanzas:

I saw a boy with eager eye
Open a book upon a stall,
And read, as he'd devour it all;
Which, when the stall-man did espy,
Soon to the boy I heard him call,
"You, Sir, you never buy a book,
Therefore in one you shall not look."
The boy pass'd slowly on, and with a sigh
He wish'd he never had been
taught to read,
Then of the old churl's books he should
have had no need.

Of sufferings the poor have many,
Which never can the rich annoy:
I soon perceived another boy,
Who look'd as if he'd not had any
Food, for that day at least—enjoy
The sight of cold meat in a tavern larder.

This boy's case, then thought I, is surely harder,
Thus hungry, longing, thus without a penny,
Beholding choice of dainty-dressed meat:
No wonder if he wish he ne'er had learn'd to
eat.

PASSAGE FROM "AREOPAGITICA" BY JOHN MILTON

PASSAGE FROM "AREOPAGITICA" BY JOHN MILTON

BOOKS ARE NOT ABSOLUTELY DEAD things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was, whose progeny they are. Nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book. Who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image—but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth, but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse.

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